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# GUITAR WORLD

MARCH 1995

READERS POLL ISSUE

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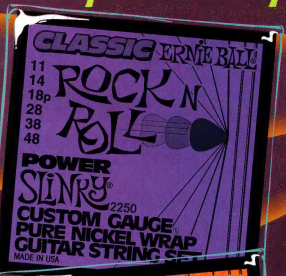
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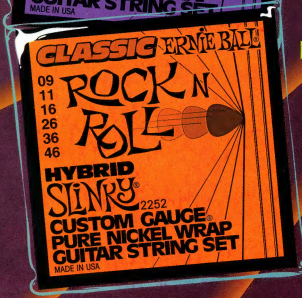
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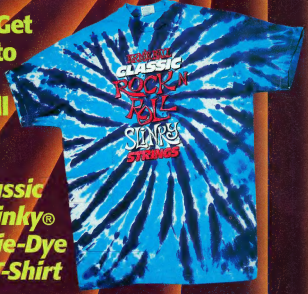

VOL. 15, No. 3 March 1995

ON THE COVER
Kurt Cobain
By M. Lisson/Redferns/Retna
THIS PAGE
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By Christopher Gallo

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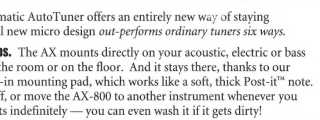


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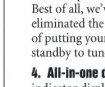

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MARCH 1995 VOL. 15, NO.3

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## Interstellar Guitar Overdrive

A FEW MONTHS AGO, Guitar World tried something new in the history of guitar magazines. We launched Guitar World Online, a place where computer-savvy guitarists could commune, exchange ideas and download guitar-related information 24 hours a day.

Some thought we were crazy. Isn't CyberSpace a cold, unfriendly environment of indecipherable computer codes? Well, we've discovered that it's actually a pretty friendly place, inhabited by thousands of six-string buckaroos from all over the world eager to talk about anything and everything guitar-related.

If you have yet to go online, here's what you're missing: Guitar World Online members can chat with each other as they sit at their computers, have their gear questions answered, and even correspond with Guitar World editors, who've become a passel of confirmed online junkies. Hot topics of cyberconversation this month have been the Parker Fly guitar, Fender amps, Digitech effects, Pearl Jam and Guitar World transcriptions.

There are even greater benefits for GW onliners, such as access to our archive of expanded interviews and original, unpublished articles. Members can download and enjoy these whenever they want. Our expanded, 20-page interview with Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan has been one of this month's most popular files, along with articles on buying a new guitar. Our collection of online equipment reviews has had over 1,000 accesses, and if you have a multimedia PC or Macintosh, you can download our growing library of special interactive lessons with our columnists. Our first lessons with John Petrucci have proven to be insanely popular, and this month we'll introduce lessons with Dimebag Darrell.

As is the Guitar World way, we will continue to look for ways to better our service. In the next few months, for instance, we plan to introduce a series of online interviews. Two nights a month you can log on and chat with some of the biggest names in rock. Our first interview, with the Doors' Robby Kreiger, appeared on January 17th; it is currently available as a downloadable file. Future guests will include columnist Dimebag Darrell, Megadeth's Marty Friedman and representatives from Fender guitars.

To learn how to get involved, simply call CompuServe toll free in the United States at 800-524-3388 and ask for representative #548 to receive a free month of CompuServe's basic services and a $15 credit towards time on Guitar World Online. If you're already a CompuServe member, just type "GO GUITAR" at any prompt.

—**BRAD TOLINSKI**
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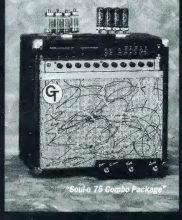

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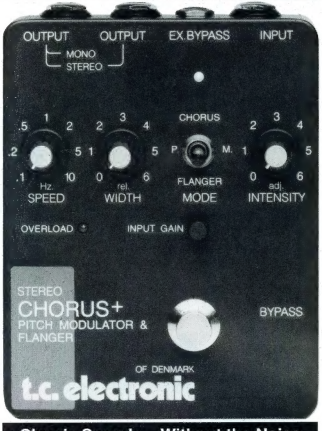


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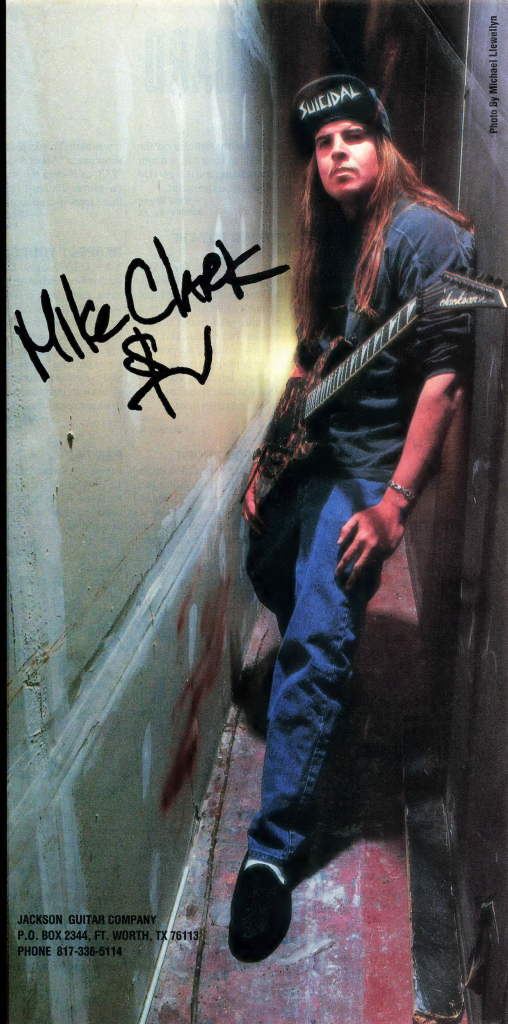


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# SOUNDING BOARD

## FREEDOM ROCK

IT TOOK ME five minutes to get my jaw off the floor after seeing the cover of your Jan. '95 issue. Punk is probably the most liberating music ever conceived, and everyone seems to pass over it as an influence on today's biggest bands. Keep up the good work!

**—Chris Egan, Flemington, NJ**

YOU ARE GODS! Your January issue kicked ass! Green Day, Buzzcocks, Ramones, The Clash...the list goes on and on. Punk rules! I figured you lamebrains would catch on eventually. Thanks a big ass load!

**—Joe Colvert Tuscaloosa, AL**

I WAS PLEASED TO see Tom Verlaine mentioned in the "Punk Guitar" article. Although very few would consider Verlaine a punk rocker, he is a genius as far as I'm concerned. Verlaine has created some very unique sounds, both as a member of Television and as a solo artist.

**—Jason Smith Louisville, KY**

Thanks for the articles on the Sex Pistols. They are a major influence to me and it is good to see them get some credit.

**—Kelly Brown Kissimmee, FL**

## NOTHING BUT THE FACTS

I WAS ENTHUSED to find Mike Dirnt's explanation of "what happened to Green Day." I've heard everyone's explanation of Green Day's change of record label—everyone but Green Day's. I thank you profusely for printing the viewpoint of the musician, as you always have. I'm very happy that you didn't mutilate them as other magazines have.

**—Jen Palatine, IL**

## PUNK FOR PROFIT

IF YOU REALLY wanted to do an article on punk, why didn't you write about Bratmobile, Mukilteo Fairies, Raooul, the Queers, Frodus and other punk bands that are around now? Maybe it's 'cause those bands won't turn a big enough profit for your magazine. How many more pathetic, exploitative, rehashed articles on '77 punk do we need? And please don't even mention Green Day and punk in the same sentence. D.I.Y., not EMI!

**—Allison Cohen Plainsboro, NJ**

## HAIR-BRAINED

A WHOLE ISSUE on punk? Are you kidding? I know Guitar World has been going down hill lately, but this is fucking ridiculous. What's next, an issue on Eighties "Hair Bands?" You just can't seem to make it through a whole issue without referring to the demise of the Eighties "Hair Bands." Popular music is just as crappy now as it was then. Thanks for the transcription to "About A Girl" [*Jan '95* ], as if even the worst guitar player couldn't figure out that piece-of-crap song.

**—Toby Frigerio Chicago, IL**

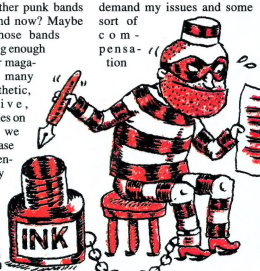
## RESPECT YOURSELF

YOUR D.I.Y. ARTICLE [*Jan. '95*] was well-researched and enlightening, particularly in conjunction with the punk cover story and your recent hardcore article [*Nov.'94*]. Reading the opinions of Ian Mackaye and Brett Gurewitz, two people whom I highly respect, reiterated to me that it's not who you're signed with, but your personal and musical integrity that count.

**—Antonia Simigis Chicago, IL**

## PEN PAL

I HAVE ONLY received seven of 12 1994 issues. The ones I have received have been late and some have been damaged. I demand my issues and some sort of compensation




for your ignorance.

And by the way, if you guys don't set me straight, I guarantee I will cost you a hundredfold what it would cost just to pay your dues. I'm doing 25 years in CLUB FED [*federal prison*], and I'll make it my personal goal to fuck you guys up. I have nothing better to do with my time anyway. I'll just sit here and write letter after letter after letter to every motherfucker out there. Don't even think about getting away with my money, you fucks.

**—Calvin J Coohey Man., KY**

*Thanks for your letter, Mr. Coohey. We welcome correspondence from all our readers.—GW Ed.*

## WATERS TORTURE

IN THE JANUARY issue, Brad Tolinski rates Pink Floyd's latest album number four of the year. Then, he goes on to say that David Gilmour *was* Pink Floyd. Sorry, maybe writing "Dark Side," "Wish You Were Here," "Animals" and "The Wall" wasn't enough for Roger Waters to qualify. You are *way* off base in claiming Gilmour was the band. Sure he was a part of it, but Waters was the leader, and deserves that recognition.

**—Jeffrey Rosenberg Montreal, Canada**

## RŸCHE FURY

A SINCERE THANKS for your interview with Queensrÿche, the best band in existence. Queensrÿche's *Promised Land* is the best album I've ever heard, period.

By the way, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Stone Temple Pilots, etc. all suck. To mention them in the same breath as Queenrÿche is ludicrous. Queensrÿche and *Promised Land* rules!

**—David A. Mennie OAk View, CA**

## PYROTECHNIQUE

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, thank you for transcribing Dream Theater's "Erotomania" [*Jan '95*]. Dream Theater is certainly one of the most talented and musically refreshing bands around today. I'm proud that your magazine had the balls to transcribe something from a true innovator: John Petrucci. Andy Aledort must have

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# SOUNDING BOARD

worked like a bitch to figure this one out. Your magazine rules.

**—Mike Berkely**
**Creston, OH**

## TECHNICAL FOUL

SIRS, YOUR MAGAZINE is in trouble. I thought it was dedicated to helping guitarists expand and improve through the usage of your great transcriptions. But over the past few months, you have included work by musically pathetic bands. I wonder how much a person can learn from a Nirvana song. I suspect not much more than three or four barre chords. I thought your magazine was better than the others because you included technically demanding pieces, but you are quickly stooping to the "we-cater-only-to-the-popular-bands" level. If I see the Offspring in your magazine, I will promptly stop buying your magazine and will burn all my old ones in protest. Get your act together, boys.

**—Paul Jones**
**Albany, NY**

## ENLARGED SCREEN

I NOTICED THAT the article about Pink Floyd ["*Saucerful Of Secrets*," *Jan. '95*] didn't say anything about the enlarged portions of the *Division Bell* album cover. What's the deal with those? Are they authentic enlargements? I also noticed a credit near the bottom: "Art by Michael Sexton." Is he the layout artist, the person who designed the cover, or did he fabricate the enlarged images?

**—Thomas Hakaru**
**No Address Given**

*The enlarged images were merely Michael Sexton's artistic interpretation of the Publius Enigma.—GW Ed.*

## TOOTH & CONSEQUENCES

I WANTED TO clarify a couple of errors in your Dec '94 Eric Clapton article: The tuning for "How Long" is open E (E, B, E, G#, B, E). Also, Andy Fairweather Low's guitar is fitted

with a DeArmond, not a "Diamond," pickup.

I will accept full blame for these errors, as, at the time Alan Di Perna consulted me for the information, I was recovering from major dental surgery and was on some seriously industrial-strength painkillers! So with those in my system and my Scottish accent, "DeArmond" probably sounded like "Diamond" over a transatlantic phone line. My apologies to Alan for informing him wrongly.

**—Lee Dickson**
**London England**

*Lee is Eric Clapton's guitar tech.—GW Ed.*

## CORRECTIONS

In the Jan '95 Soundcheck section, the list price of the Mesa/Boogie V-Twin Preamp Pedal was incorrectly listed. The correct price is $349.

Some of the transcription credits in the February '95 issue were incorrect. Following are the correct credits: "Back In Black" (guitar) transcribed by Askold Buk; "Night Moves" (guitar) transcribed by Jeff Perrin; "Night Moves" (bass) and "Bridge" (bass) transcribed by Michael Duclos.

**Guitar World is now online! Letters can be sent to our Internet address: sounding.board @guitar-world.com.**

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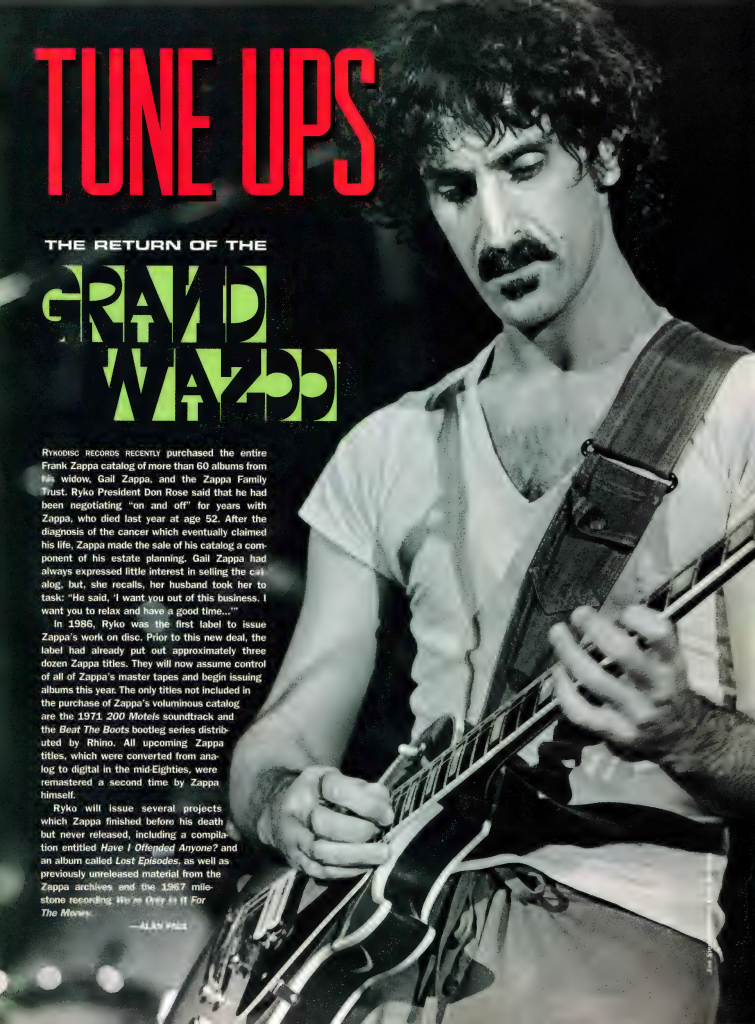
# TUNE UPS

## THE RETURN OF THE

# GRAND WAZOO

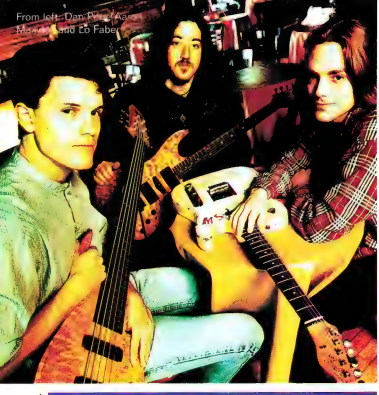


RYKODISC RECORDS RECENTLY purchased the entire Frank Zappa catalog of more than 60 albums from his widow, Gail Zappa, and the Zappa Family Trust. Ryko President Don Rose said that he had been negotiating "on and off" for years with Zappa, who died last year at age 52. After the diagnosis of the cancer which eventually claimed his life, Zappa made the sale of his catalog a component of his estate planning. Gail Zappa had always expressed little interest in selling the catalog, but, she recalls, her husband took her to task: "He said, 'I want you out of this business. I want you to relax and have a good time...'"

In 1986, Ryko was the first label to issue Zappa's work on disc. Prior to this new deal, the label had already put out approximately three dozen Zappa titles. They will now assume control of all of Zappa's master tapes and begin issuing albums this year. The only titles not included in the purchase of Zappa's voluminous catalog are the 1971 *200 Motels* soundtrack and the *Beat The Boots* bootleg series distributed by Rhino. All upcoming Zappa titles, which were converted from analog to digital in the mid-Eighties, were remastered a second time by Zappa himself.

Ryko will issue several projects which Zappa finished before his death but never released, including a compilation entitled *Have I Offended Anyone?* and an album called *Lost Episodes*, as well as previously unreleased material from the Zappa archives and the 1967 milestone recording *We're Only In It For The Money*.

—ALAN PAUL



From left: Dan Pifer, Aaron Maxwell and Lo Faber

Sue Schaffner

# GOD ST. WINE

## Something Old, Something New

GOD STREET WINE are an old-fashioned jam band who have used new-fangled technology to develop a strong grassroots following. They've become the hottest band in cyberspace by having a potent presence on the Internet, utilizing an ingenious phone card promotion for their major label debut, *$1.99 Romances* (Eleven/Geffen), and instituting an innovative on-line ticket-sales program designed to bypass the loathed TicketMaster surcharge. Still, the real key to God Street's appeal is the lively, improv-heavy two-guitar sound developed by Lo Faber and Aaron Maxwell.

Faber grew up in Princeton, New Jersey, where he played the university party circuit along with future members of Blues Traveler, Phish and the Spin Doctors. "The scene in Princeton was very progressive," he says. "All the local bands did original material; they weren't cover bands."

The young guitarist spent the rest of his time combing the Princeton Record Exchange for rare records by Frank Zappa, one of his enduring heroes. "I love Zappa," he says. "I actually transcribed 'St. Alphonso's Pancake Breakfast' for a project when I was at the Manhattan School Of Music."

Faber attended the school after moving to New York City. There he met bassist Dan Pifer and guitarist Aaron Maxwell. The two guitarists had very different styles; the classically trained Maxwell was a melody-oriented soloist while Faber approached the guitar from its structural, songwriting and rhythmic aspects. They honed their chops working together as a jazz duo, before finalizing the God Street lineup and becoming favorites on the emerging "neo-hippie" scene led by Faber's old Princeton friends in Phish, Blues Traveler and Spin Doctors.

Faber, Maxwell and Co. parlayed their unique sound into a series of recordings released on their own Ripe & Ready label—*Live At The 712 Club, Bag* and *Who's Driving?*—before being signed by Geffen. On *$1.99 Romances*, the band furthered their free-form, Steely-Dan-meets-the-Grateful-Dead sound by taking a new approach to their guitar arrangements.

"We played everything live in the studio, then went back and overdubbed all the guitar parts," says Faber. "When we mixed it, we used all the guitars—the overdubs and the tracking parts. It's a subtle difference but one which makes the overall guitar sound much thicker."

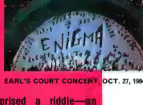
—JOHN SWENSON

# PINK FLOYD

## A SPECIAL REPORT

### REVENGE OF PUBLIUS

Back in June, Pink Floyd fans on the Internet found their discussion on the Usenet newsgroup alt.music.pink-floyd rudely interrupted by an interloper who identified himself only as "Publius." Using cryptic, melodramatic phrases, Publius proclaimed that hidden clues in the band's *The Division Bell* album artwork, music and lyrics comprised a riddle—an "enigma"—and that there was a "unique reward" in store for the person who unraveled it. For two months, Publius bedeviled Floyd followers with his droppings, and was dismissed as a loudmouthed lunatic—until, three days after Publius promised a public sign of his "truthfulness," the words "ENIGMA PUBLIUS" appeared in the stage lights during a Pink Floyd concert at New Jersey's Meadowlands Arena. Since then, newsgroup followers have been




EARL'S COURT CONCERT, OCT. 27, 199

# papa, i'm coming home

Steven Cario

OZZY OSBOURNE BEGAN preproduction in January for his forthcoming album, *X. Ray*. The album, tentatively due to be released late this spring, will feature Zakk Wylde on guitar.

"I've got my solo career and I'm not going to put it down," says Zakk, referring to his band, Pride & Glory, "but Ozzy called and said he needed me, and I'd do anything for him."

Adds Osbourne, "I would really love for Zakk to be back playing with me in the band, but he's got his own career now. I personally don't think there's a better guitar player out there or a greater person to have around than Zakk, and nothing would make me happier than to have him back full time."

And whatever became of Osbourne's sessions with Steve Vai? "Steve was nothing less than a gentleman, and he is a very accomplished musician," says the Oz. "I thought we got on great, and I have no bad feelings towards him whatsoever, but it was a record company decision to split us up; they thought things were taking too long and they wanted to try pairing me up with some other songwriters. It ended up being the right decision, because I've written 25-30 songs for the album. I hope to end up using some of the songs Steve and I wrote because I think there were a couple of great tunes there."

—ALAN PAUL

# MIKE AND THE MECHANICS

Silvia Otte

"VARIETY IS THE key to staying interested in your music," says Mike Rutherford. "After 20 years with the same band, it's just too narrow if that's all you do. Luckily, Genesis is big enough to be able to take a few years off here and there, and it's that bit of fresh air that keeps us going."

Rutherford, Genesis' co-founder and guitarist, is talking about his highly successful "pet" project, Mike + The Mechanics, who've just released *Beggar On A Beach Of Gold* (Atlantic). Their fourth album since their 1985 self-titled debut furthers the band's mix of American soul and British rock. "The two Pauls, Carrack and Young, are r&b-based," Rutherford explains, "and I'm very English. That combination produces something of an original sound."

The original sound of Mike's other band helped create progressive rock. Aren't they more than due for a box set? "Funny you should ask—I was just discussing this the other day with Peter [*Gabriel*] and Tony [*Banks*], because we found some demos of songs from our first album, *From Genesis to Revelation* (1969). Some of them date all the way back to '66, when we were still in school together! What sounds best is Pete's voice—but our backing harmonies are terrible. I think it would be of interest to Genesis fans, so they could see where the music came from." The genesis of Genesis, as it were.

—ANDY ALEDORT

William Hames

# WAYNE KRAMER

## Hard Again

AFTER WANDERING FOR nearly two decades in the commercial wilderness, Wayne Kramer has finally arrived. In the Sixties he was lead guitarist for the wildly influential MC5, whose work anticipated genres as divergent as metal, punk and prog rock. Following the demise of the "Five," Kramer did time in prison on a cocaine rap, but made a comeback playing stints with Johnny Thunders and the Was Brothers. The early Nineties saw him in a Florida bar band, pounding out cover tunes, but his high-voltage muse never deserted him; the man was just biding his time.

Last year he relocated to L.A. and recorded *The Hard Stuff* for Epitaph Records. Crammed with rocking tunes that live up to its title, this release proves that Kramer hasn't forgotten any of the lessons he learned growing up on the soul-charged streets of Detroit.

"It was the guys doing sessions at Motown who inspired all us young cats," Kramer recalls. "They understood what it meant to lock into a groove and rock. It was about energy and moves, dynamics and intensity. You can see it in my work today—I don't just play the electric guitar, I play the amplifier too." And with contributions from members of The Melvins, Rancid and Clawhammer, *The Hard Stuff* is nothing less than a meeting of two generations of sonic radicals.

Kramer has clearly lost none of his passion for social commentary since the days when the MC5 was the house band for the Sixties' youth rebellion; songs like "Junkie Romance" and "Pillar Of Fire" rail against the insanity of America's love affair with drugs and guns. "This album is a report from the frontlines, the next installment in my ongoing work," he says. "And this is only the beginning. I want to do a record a year for the next 10 years."

— DAVID GRAD

# HORSE'S AXE

ALMOST SIX YEARS AGO, Ass Ponys guitarist Chuck Cleaver picked up an unusual guitar for $75 at a flea market. He's used the guitar ever since, both live and in the studio; it's all over the Ass Pony's new album, *Electric Rock Music* (A&M).

"It's never needed any work," says Cleaver. That's not unusual, but this is: in all that time, the Ass Pony *never knew* the identity of his oddball guitar's manufacturer. "No one else had it, and no one knows the make," he says.

No one, that is, until Guitar World got into the act. First, we contacted Danny Courtenay, proprietor of Chelsea Second Hand Guitars in New York City. Courtenay determined that the mystery instrument was of German extraction and contacted a top expert in the field, Bob Ohman of Denver, Colorado. "It's a Klira 177," said Ohman. "The chequered binding indicates it was built sometime between 1962 and 1968." Bob Ohman, we thank you. Chuck Cleaver thanks you. Oh, roar!

Shot Photography

## WHAMMY BAR

electronically tracking Publius and his clues, trying to solve a musical mystery that may or may not even exist. The band, meanwhile, will neither confirm nor deny anything related to the entire phenomenon.

Enigma sleuths were given another very public, very cryptic clue to investigate at the band's October 27 Earl's Court show in England, which was broadcast as a Pay-Per-View special in the U.S. on November 1. At the beginning of "Another Brick In The Wall (Part II)," the word "ENIGMA," printed in large, spiky black letters and surrounded by seemingly random mathematical equations, appeared on a transparency projected behind the band, only to be hastily scribbled out by a phantom hand seconds later. Once again, the mysterious electronic messenger Publius had predicted this new signal in the Usenet newsgroup long before its appearance on stage. Days after the Earl's Court incident, fans reported that the words "Enigma Publius" cropped up in new artwork accompanying the recently-released *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* MiniDisc, and that, when played backwards, a passage in *Lapse's* "Sorrow" sounds uncanni-

Joanne Chan

# BETTIE SERVEERT

## Flying Dutchmen

SOME BANDS MAKE great studio albums, but can't work a stage. Others tear it up live, but their albums sound like they were recorded on microcassette. There are a precious few, however, that manage to do both with equal aplomb. Bettie Serveert, a sonic, verse-chorus verse band from Amsterdam, Holland, are one of the few.

After their debut album, *Palomine*, garnered worldwide acclaim, the band, whose swirling, distorted guitar sound has been compared to oldsters (Neil Young) and youngsters (Sebadoh, Come) alike, toured incessantly in an attempt to cement their fame. They did. Then they went home, where they rested and wrote. And, despite serious major label courtship, decided to stick with the indie Matador for their second album. Enter *Lamprey*.

While many bands fall off on their sophomore releases—you know, you have a lifetime to record a debut, and a year for the follow-up—Bettie has delivered a more tightly written collection of songs, with a looser, liver feel.

"We wanted the record to sound more like we do when we play live," explains singer/guitarist Carol van Dijk. "There's something that happens when we're on stage, and we thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if the record could sound like this?'"

"But," adds lead guitarist Peter Visser, "we found out that to have something sound live and clean like we wanted costs a lot of money."

Still, if the critics are correct (and they always are), this band won't have to worry about studio costs for much longer. Bettie Serveert seems to be on the brink of, at the very least, a gold record and a sold-out-club-tour kinda success. Which would suit them just fine. For now.

"Everything came so fast last year," says Visser. "We're just trying to keep our heads, to take it slow."

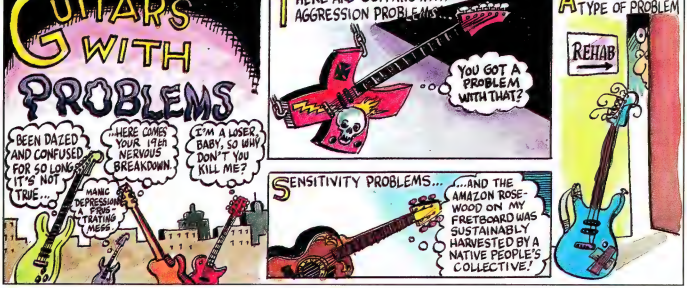
—TONY GERVINO

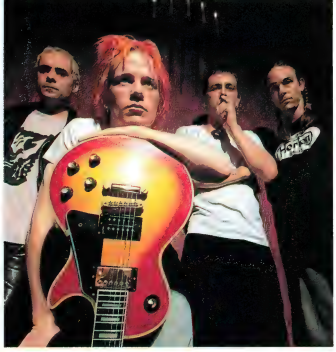
# MY favorite MARTIN

VIP Photographic

THREE YEARS AFTER his *Unplugged* performance helped spur renewed interest in acoustic guitars, Eric Clapton has collaborated with Martin Guitars to create a signature model. The 000-42EC was designed to accommodate Clapton's wish to blend two vintage Martin small-bodied acoustic guitars that he regularly performs with: a 000-42 and a 000-28. Only 461 of the 000-42EC's will be made, each individually numbered and signed by Clapton and C.F. Martin IV. A significant portion of the proceeds from the sale of these guitars, which list at $8,100, will be disbursed to children's charities worldwide.

GUITAR SAM BY JIM RYAN


GUITARS WITH PROBLEMS
I'VE BEEN DAZED AND CONFUSED FOR SO LONG IT'S NOT TRUE...
HERE COMES YOUR 19TH NERVOUS BREAKDOWN
I'M A LOSER, BABY, SO WHY DON'T YOU KILL ME?
MANIC DEPRESSIVE? PMS? TRATING MEGS
THERE ARE GUITARS WITH AGGRESSION PROBLEMS...
YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
SENSITIVITY PROBLEMS...
...AND THE AMAZON ROSEWOOD ON MY FRETBOARD WAS SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED BY A NATIVE PEOPLE'S COLLECTIVE!
...AND EVERY OTHER TYPE OF PROBLEM
REHAB



James Bland

# COMPULSION

## Heart Core

TO THE UNINITIATED, Compulsion seem heavy, hostile and fairly one-dimensional. Their songs abound with blaring power chords played at punk rock tempos, and onstage the British-based band project a power and fury reminiscent of the Sex Pistols. Behind their explosive surface, however, there is a lyrical depth which, coupled with surprisingly upbeat melodies, suggests that Compulsion is far more passionate and *com*passionate than most of their loud-guitar peers—character traits that sometimes get the band members in trouble.

"Two days ago a Marine almost killed me in a bar because he called some woman a bitch and I told him he shouldn't do that," says orange-haired guitarist Garret Lee. "That kind of thing happens to us a lot. I guess if there's any message to be found in our music it's that you shouldn't treat people like shit."

The songs on Compulsion's debut album, *Comforter* (Interscope), are aggressive and emotional, but they resound with positivity and humor, eschewing the hatred and self-loathing characteristic of many of today's hard rockers. "A lot of people use their music as some kind of personal therapy, which their audiences then have to pay for," says Lee. "We'd rather just concentrate on writing good songs and having a good time."

Structurally, the band values simplicity and dynamics, relying on slightly skewed verse-chorus arrangements that parallel those of Nirvana and the Pixies. Thematically, however, Compulsion want to open new doors. "A lot of rock music is completely dumb, which is good, but we're trying to do something a little different, and a bit more developed," says Lee. "We don't believe in smashing up hotels and the like because somebody who gets minimum wage is going to have to clean it up. I suppose we're not a very rock and roll band really—but we do like beer. Probably too much."

—JON WIEDERHORN

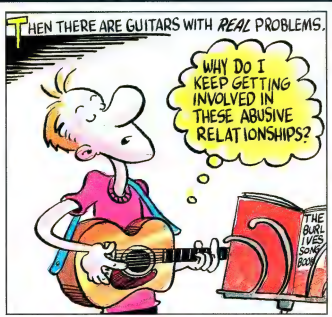
ly like "Enigma Publius."

"These signals are very conclusive," says Internet enigma-tracker Craig McGee. "With the connection to *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, it looks to me like the enigma is an idea the band had years ago that is just now panning out."

Meanwhile, Publius himself posted more encouragement to the newsgroup on Sunday, November 27. The message held a hidden anagram which, decoded, spelled POLES APART, the title of a track from *The Division Bell*.

Are Publius and his enigma on the level, speaking surreptitiously on behalf of Pink Floyd? Or is the band only getting involved now, capitalizing on the unexpected attention and milking the mystery for all it's worth? For the latest information, theories and clues, read the Usenet newsgroup alt.music.pink-floyd (you'll need Internet access through America Online, CompuServe, Delphi or an independent local provider) and watch for messages with "Publius" in the subject line.

—DAN AMRICH


THEN THERE ARE GUITARS WITH REAL PROBLEMS.
WHY DO I KEEP GETTING INVOLVED IN THESE ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS?
THE BURNIES SONG

Jim Cooper

Eddie C. Campbell
every note he plays that
blues don't have to hit you over
the head in order to grab you by
the guts. His laid-back, often
humorous vocal delivery and
behind-the-beat, reverb-saturated
guitar playing make That's
When I Know (Blind Pig) one of
the most subtly ingratiating
blues albums of recent years.
Campbell, 48, spent over 20
years as a Chicago sideman
backing the likes of
Little Walter, Otis Rush
before moving to East
and becoming
grew on the continent
circuit. Now he's back
Chicago attempting
with the likes of Buddy
When I Know, his third
album, to at long last
establish himself on his
home turf.
"I want to get credit
being an artist
Campbell. "The reason
me to play myself
have to do. I don't
like anyone else. I want
to hear Albert King in
Albert. I see so many of the
ple copying Hendrix because they
just don't have a style
me. See, what I
about
and
CLARK PAUL

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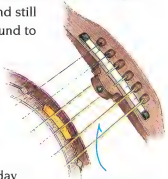

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# READERS POLL

Clockwise from top left: Michael Sexton, Steve Eichner / Retna, Jeffrey Mayer/Star File, James Bland

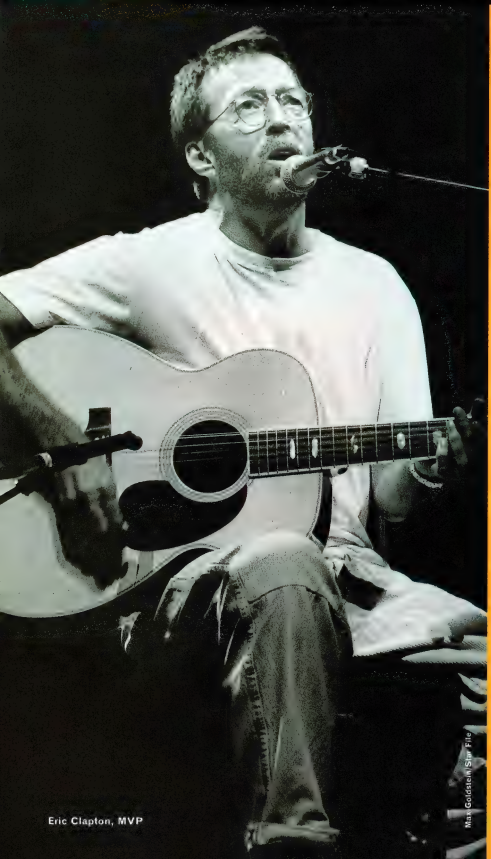
**One of the more predictable things in life is the unpredictability of Guitar World's annual Readers Poll. But if previous polls have been consistently eye-opening, then the results of the 1994 version will positively rip your eyeballs from their sockets. Here are some of the more dramatic indications suggested by the poll:**

- Shred continues to decline precipitously in popularity. Metal, shred's first cousin (once removed), is also looking a bit pale in the face; where poll respondents once regularly scrawled "Metal Rules!" on their ballots, in 1994 "Metal Sucks!" appeared with shocking frequency.
- Punk people (e.g. Offspring, Green Day) appeared as a powerful force in the view of our readers, while the ascendancy of the grungefellows (Soundgarden, Nirvana, Alice In Chains) was shown to be an absolute fact of guitar life. This is the De-tune generation.
- The incredible resurgence of the classic rockers—Clapton, Page, Gilmour, the Rolling Stones—was demonstrated with the force of an old, explosive fart. Age *is* before beauty, and thousands of Guitar World readers know it.

Fortunately, one thing never changes in the world of guitar, and that is the annual parade of exciting new talent. As a supplement to our Readers Poll, we include a substantial look at some of the artists who placed high in our Best New Talent category, including the winner, Peter Klett of Candlebox.

No assessment of 1994 can be complete without a tribute to Kurt Cobain. Thus, we conclude our Readers Poll section with a special look at Nirvana's performance on *MTV Unplugged*, the recording of which was voted Best Alternative Album by Guitar World's readers.

# 1995 READERS POLL



Eric Clapton, MVP

Mark Goldstein/Star File

**Clapton reigns. Punk rocks. Kurt is sorely missed.**

**Our opinions? Nope, it's your word.**

## MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

1. **ERIC CLAPTON**
2. Dimebag Darrell
3. Jimmy Page
4. Kurt Cobain
5. John Petrucci

## BEST NEW TALENT

1. **PETER KLETT (CANDLEBOX)**
2. Billie Joe Armstrong (Green Day)
3. Noodles Wasserman and Dexter Holland (The Offspring)
4. Rivers Cuomo (Weezer)
5. Ed Roland, Dean Roland and Ross Childress (Collective Soul)

## BEST ROCK GUITARIST

1. **EDDIE VAN HALEN**
2. Joe Perry
3. Slash
4. Jimmy Page
5. David Gilmour

## BEST HEAVY METAL GUITARIST

1. **DIMEBAG DARRELL**
2. Kirk Hammett
3. John Petrucci
4. Marty Friedman
5. Zakk Wylde

## BEST BLUES GUITARIST

1. **ERIC CLAPTON**
2. Buddy Guy
3. B.B. King
4. Chris Duarte
5. Johnny Winter

## BEST ALTERNATIVE GUITARIST

1. **KIM THAYIL**
2. Kurt Cobain
3. Billy Corgan
4. Jerry Cantrell
5. J Mascis

## BEST LIVE BAND

1. **METALLICA**
2. Pearl Jam
3. Pink Floyd
4. Pantera
5. Rolling Stones

## BEST SOLO

1. **DIMEBAG DARRELL—"PLANET CARAVAN"**
2. Kim Thayil—"Black Hole Sun"
3. Peter Klett—"Far Behind"
4. John Petrucci—"Lie"
5. Jerry Cantrell—"Whale And Wasp"

## BEST ROCK ALBUM

1. ***PURPLE*—STONE TEMPLE PILOTS**
2. *The Division Bell*—Pink Floyd
3. *Voodoo Lounge*—Rolling Stones
4. *Smash*—Offspring
5. *Candlebox*—Candlebox

## BEST HEAVY METAL ALBUM

1. ***FAR BEYOND DRIVEN*—PANTERA**
2. *Youthanasia*—Megadeth
3. *Awake*—Dream Theater
4. *Divine Intervention*—Slayer
5. *Betty*—Helmet

## BEST ALTERNATIVE ALBUM

1. ***MTV UNPLUGGED IN NEW YORK*—NIRVANA**
2. *Superunknown*—Soundgarden
3. *Dookie*—Green Day
4. *Downward Spiral*—Nine Inch Nails
5. *Live Through This*—Hole

## BEST BLUES ALBUM

1. ***FROM THE CRADLE*—ERIC CLAPTON**
2. *Blues*—Jimi Hendrix
3. *Strange Pleasure*—Jimmie Vaughan
4. *Texas Sugar/Strat Magik*—Chris Duarte
5. *Slippin' In*—Buddy Guy

## BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

1. **THE DEATH OF KURT COBAIN**
2. *Promised Land*—Queensrÿche
3. *No Quarter*—Jimmy Page and Robert Plant
4. Yngwie Malmsteen
5. *The Spaghetti Incident*—Guns N' Roses

## NOT TO MENTION.....

"Daisy Fuentes won't return my phone calls."
"Jimi Hendrix is still dead."
"My kitty never came home."
"My girlfriend got knocked up."
"Anna Nicole Smith marrying that 90-year-old guy."
"I haven't got laid in five years."
"Jeff Gilbert's *Vulgar Display Of Odor*."
"I wasn't chosen as a juror in the O.J. Simpson trial."

# 1995 OFFSPRING

# SPREADING THE DISEASE

**Punk fever is infecting the mainstream, & the carrier is the Offspring. Dexter Holland, the band's guitarist & virus expert, offers his upbeat prognosis.**

**By Michael Azerrad**

OFFSPRING LEAD SINGER/GUITARIST DEXTER HOLLAND JUST TOOK A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM PURSUING A DOCTORATE IN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY FROM USC. HIS SPECIALTY? CLONING VIRUSES. HOLLAND DOESN'T LIKE JOURNALISTS TO MAKE THE CONNECTION, BUT CLONING VIRUSES IS AN EXCELLENT METAPHOR FOR WHAT THE OFFSPRING ARE DOING. THE VIRUS, OF COURSE, IS PUNK ROCK —AND WITH THEIR THIRD ALBUM, *SMASH*, THE OFFSPRING HAVE SPREAD NEARLY FOUR MILLION CASES OF THE CONTAGION AROUND THE WORLD. ALONG WITH UP-AND-COMING LABEL-MATES NOFX, PENNYWISE AND RANCID AND MULTI-PLATINUM MAJOR LABEL PUNKS GREEN DAY, THE OFFSPRING ARE SPEARHEADING A MASSIVE HARDCORE INFECTION OF THE HEARTS AND MINDS

**Photography by Charles Peterson**

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of America's youth.

The secret to the Offspring's success is that although their drums and guitars pack a ruthless kick and Holland's vocals sound like a drill sergeant singing in the shower, they do what any breakthrough band does—bring the underground *above* ground by injecting a little pop into the equation. So the Offspring often mix up the hardcore formula by throwing in such strange and bizarre musical devices as dynamic shifts (gasp!), melodies (heaven forbid!), and sub-jackhammer tempos (oh no, not that!), not to mention some respectable production values (tsk, tsk).

The Offspring may have suddenly invaded your consciousness, but this is no overnight success. Inspired by hardcore punk bands such as the Adolescents, T.S.O.L. and the Vandals, the Offspring started eight years ago in California's ultra-conservative Orange County (the one that's now just as bankrupt financially as it is politically). One fateful evening in 1986, Holland and his friends couldn't get in to see their favorite band at a local club, so they just started their own group. They released a thousand copies of a single called "I'll Be Waiting" in 1987, then recorded an obscure self-titled debut album two years later (a reissue is in the works).

They finally wound up on the seminal L.A. hardcore label Epitaph, owned by Bad Religion guitarist Brett Gurewitz. Coupled with a lot of hard touring, 1992's *Ignition* album built up a widespread, loyal Offspring fan base which included a healthy contingent of skateboarders and snowboarders, who favored the band's sound for competitions and home videos. Then came *Smash*.

Propelled by an ultra-catchy Arabian surf guitar line and that parenthetical tag line, "Come Out And Play (Keep 'Em Separated)" became a big mainstream radio hit. Even MTV got in on the act, eventually propelling *Smash* to number four on the Billboard album chart and triple-platinum status, an incredible achievement for an indie release. Industry pundits thought they smelled a one-hit wonder, but two follow-up singles, "Self Esteem" and "Gotta Get Away," have made strong showings, proving that *Smash*—and the Offspring—have depth.

Articulate and modest, Holland is the band's mastermind, doing the lion's share of the songwriting, playing every guitar solo on *Smash* and doing all the lead singing. Nursing a cold in a humble Salt Lake City motel room, he reflected on guitars, punk rock, and what he likes to call "sonic real estate."

**GUITAR WORLD:** I'm sure a lot of people think you came out of nowhere, but for years, you guys were part of a thriving underground network, which is where you got your initial support.

**DEXTER HOLLAND:** There *is* this underground circuit that you just have to tap into. A lot of the way we tapped into it was through a magazine called *Maximumrocknroll*. There's always a few people in every town—you'd be amazed—that are definitely into setting up their own shows and stuff; it's a matter of finding them. It's a great support network for bands. Even for a band that's very amateurish like we used to be, there's still something out there, people who are really excited and supportive and helpful. They kind of keep you going. Gilman Street [*a venerable punk rock hole-in-the-wall in Berkeley, CA*], a venue that let us play, was another example. We

weren't really too hot, but there were still people who were really supportive even back then. You don't have to get played on MTV or the radio to have a following.

**GW:** Now you're playing in a much larger arena. What's been the reaction of your original community?

**HOLLAND:** It's kind of mixed. I think some people write us off as sellouts, but a lot of people realize that we really haven't done anything besides release a record—just like every other band on Epitaph did this year.

**GW:** The budget for *Smash* was about $20,000. Did you think that was a lot to spend on recording?

**HOLLAND:** Oh, yeah. We thought we were being very extravagant. We just booked ourselves into a good studio and worked as quickly as we could. It just kept adding up and we thought, "Oh gosh, we're spending a lot of money." But at that point, we were locked into it and we had to finish as quickly as we could.

**GW:** Why not do it the punk rock way and use a cheap studio?

**HOLLAND:** We've done that, but I mean, a lot of punk rock records are great—the music and the songs are great in spirit—but they don't come across well, production-wise. That was something we didn't want to be limited to. I wanted to be able to go beyond that—I wanted to make a record that *sounded* good, too. The way to do that is to go into a decent studio.

**GW:** Well, a lot of people say the energy and performance are the only things that matter, and anything else is just catering to the radio.

**HOLLAND:** I think that's bullshit. What do you listen to music for except for the way it sounds? That whole ethic of doing things poorly just to be punk doesn't make sense to me. I still think that the way this band works is, the energy of punk music is there, but I want to be able to execute the songs well. Going into the studio and making it sound good is part of that.

**GW:** But how do you stay punk with a hefty—well, *relatively* hefty—recording budget? *Smash* is a pretty smooth-sounding record, you've got to admit.

**HOLLAND:** People go back and forth on these electronic bulletin boards for days about what is punk. For me, punk is an attitude and a spirit and musical style: fast with loud guitars, with lyrics about politics or whatever gets you down, that kind of thing. So I think that going into a decent studio and making a record that sounds good just elevates the whole thing, making it come across in a better way, making it more listenable.

**GW:** The Clash were punk, but so were T.S.O.L. The Buzzcocks were punk, but so were the Germs. What's the common thread?

**HOLLAND:** I don't know exactly. It's something you have to really delve into for a long time before you get a feel for it. All those bands have a spirit that goes against the grain of mainstream society, whatever the times were. That's true, musically, as well, although the Clash eventually got accepted by the mainstream in a big way. But what they were doing was very different for the times.

**GW:** So what makes you guys at odds with mainstream society?

**HOLLAND:** Compared to what was on the *Billboard* charts before our record came out, I think our record is pretty abrasive—I don't think there's too many records where they sing about gang warfare and freeway shootings. "Self Esteem" tackles a subject most rock and roll bands wouldn't think about. They would think about, "I want to party tonight and get all the babes I can." And showing a vulnerability is kind of punk, too. That kind of goes against whatever the mainstream rock and roll attitude is.

**GW:** That's something a lot of the early punk bands projected and continue to right up to this day; a tough stance that is actually screaming, "I am really such a nerd. Can you tell?" Elvis Costello did that, and

Charles Peterson

so does Green Day.

**HOLLAND:** Yeah, that's true. Elvis was great. I think the whole idea of trying to be cool and look cool just seems dumb to bands like us.

**GW:** But there is a definite punk style, especially with hardcore, which has a very rigid set of rules. Do you feel constrained by those rules?

**HOLLAND:** Yeah, there really is kind of a set of rules. But the whole reason punk started was a reaction *against* having rules. And it did come out in the music. Black Flag played shows with the Go-Go's—they were both considered very punk at the time. But as time went on, it seemed like punk had to have a certain sound and a certain style of dress, like a leather jacket. If you didn't fit into that then you weren't punk. The same thing applies now. I really didn't want us to be limited so much by that musically.

**GW:** So what did you do?

**HOLLAND:** I ignored what the rules are supposed to be. Punk rock records are usually about not sounding good, not worrying about trying to make it sound good. Just a wall of guitars. There are a lot of things about punk rock that make listening to a whole record monotonous. I didn't want to put out a record that was like that, so we tried to mix up *Smash* a little bit. There's a ska song, although punk and ska kind of go hand in hand—there's an attitude to ska as well. Songs like "Come Out And Play" and "Gotta Get Away" were a little bit different-sounding, a little slower. It doesn't always have to be 90 miles an hour. Sometimes we leave out parts—it doesn't always have to be in your face, everything all at once, so sometimes we'll be comfortable with leaving out a guitar part or making the vocals go a cappella for a minute.

**GW:** Even the great painters start out by imitating the masters, just like a lot of bands start out without a specific vision and imitate other bands before finding their own sound.

**HOLLAND:** I was very influenced by certain bands in the very beginning. The Dead Kennedys were a big influence for me. Our early stuff sounded like that. I was also very into T.S.O.L. We had a record before we were on Epitaph and you can hear those influences a lot. By the time we were on Epitaph, we were starting to come into our own a little bit more. It comes in bits and pieces, but the more you keep at it, the more you just kind of find where you're at as an—I hate to use the word "artist," but you know what I mean. Even today, I find influences in mainstream music.

**GW:** Like what?

**HOLLAND:** I think Nirvana's stuff has influenced us. They had a real breakthrough sound—real no-frills—which I really like. I think it was different from punk rock but it had a lot of the same kind of attitude. I admire Jane's Addiction a lot. A lot of times I listen to stuff like that and think, "Wow, I want to capture that kind of energy in the things we do." Hopefully you absorb all that and regurgitate it into something that's your own.

**GW:** One of the great things about Nirvana was that their songs sounded great when played on just an acoustic guitar. Can you say the same about your music?

**HOLLAND:** I remember hearing someone say that that's the sign of a great song—if you can just strum it on guitar and it will sound good. I even remember reading about the Beatles going in the studio, and the first thing they would do was just strum a song on acoustic to [*Beatles producer*] George Martin to figure out whether it was a song or not. As far as our songs go... [*laughs*] I don't know, maybe they're not such good songs, but something about punk rock just doesn't seem to come across acoustically. [*Pauses*] Hmmm, I don't know, though. You know what? I'll sit on the bus tomorrow and try it on acoustic [*laughs*] and see what it sounds like.

**GW:** You implied that punk really subsists on energy. You're 28 now. What happens when that energy starts to go?

**HOLLAND:** We approach the energy from a certain direction. It doesn't necessarily have to all be fast to have energy. One of


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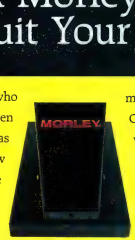


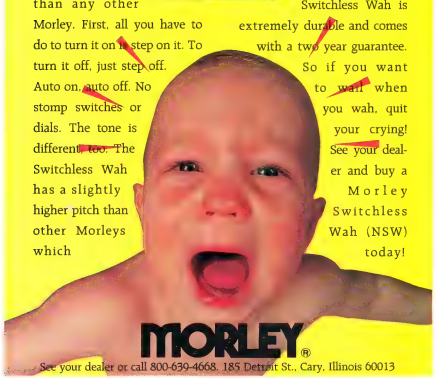

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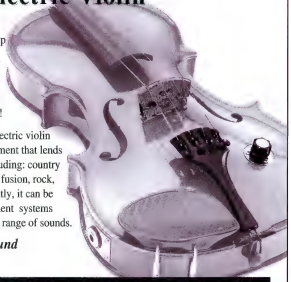

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the most well-received songs on our record—surprisingly to me, actually—is "Self Esteem," which is the slowest song on the record. It delivers its energy kind of in a punch in the middle of the song. We were trying to do some different kinds of songs on this record. And we want to continue to do that, because I don't want us to be pigeonholed as a certain kind of band: "Oh, they do that punk thing." I want us to be able to get into some different musical styles convincingly. That's *my* goal.

**GW:** What styles will you try on the next record?

**HOLLAND:** Maybe a little more along the lines of rock.

**GW:** You mean straight-ahead rock??

**HOLLAND:** Yeah, maybe a little bit. I would like to deliver good, concise pop songs, like the way the Police did, in a way. There's a lot to be said for that. If you can come across with a few numbers like that, it's really an amazing thing. Guys like Sting made it look so easy. Some of those records they made are amazing. I listen to them and go, "Goddamn!"

**GW:** How did you start playing guitar?

**HOLLAND:** To tell you the truth, I was not interested in playing guitar for a long time. When I started listening to punk music, I really wanted to be in a band, and playing guitar was a means of getting there. We decided to be a band when I was 18 so I didn't pick one up until then. I asked my parents to help me buy a guitar and they bought me a Hondo and like a 20-year-old Music Man amp.

**GW:** What was the Hondo like?

**HOLLAND:** Well, maybe I shouldn't rag on Hondo, but they're pieces of shit. [*laughs*] But it was a good deal for the money. It was only $99. But I really grew to love playing guitar. I've messed around with playing different guitars but the one I keep coming back to is Ibanez. I have a certain sound that I like—it isn't real distorted, it's kind of punchy. Even when you put distortion on, it has a real defined sound. That's an important characteristic for us, that you can move around a lot and still have a lot of definition, because the chords change real fast. I've played SG's and other Gibsons and they're great guitars, but they don't feel as well-suited to the kind of music we play. They have a more resonant sound, more sustain. They take up a little more space, and though that's great in itself, for me, that's not the kind of thing I'm looking for for this kind of music. It belongs more on a Stone Temple Pilots record. That's not to slag them off at all—I like that band, I really do. They have a guitar sound that really takes up real estate.

**GW:** Offspring has a very different attack than STP!

**HOLLAND:** Well, all the chord changing

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**GW:** Dynamics are really powerful—you can play loud for the entire set, but it doesn't have the same impact as when you turn down every now and them.

**HOLLAND:** Exactly. Fugazi are masters of that. Even Smashing Pumpkins do a lot of stuff like that. "Self Esteem" does that. Punk can be a very limited medium—the way the drums are in your face all the time, the guitars...We've really tried to think about this and ask, "What can we do to capture the energy of the music and still make it come across in a real listenable way?" So sometimes we leave out instruments rather than leaving everything dialed up to 11.

**GW:** You don't play much guitar live.

**HOLLAND:** Well, I play for about half the set. I used to go see shows and I never had a whole lot of fun watching three-piece bands. I just felt they were so busy taking care of business on guitar that they weren't able to have a whole lot of action on stage. I like watching bands that have four or five members and a stand-up singer. So when we started, I wanted to get a little bit of both worlds. Sometimes two guitars sound good and sometimes a song doesn't really need it. In those instances, I can be free and jump around a little bit more and try to get a little bit more energy out of the set. I play guitar when it's warranted. Otherwise, Noodles [*Wasserman*] can handle it.

**GW:** How much do you play in the studio?

**HOLLAND:** I play on all the tracks in the studio. I do a lot of the songwriting, and when we're in the studio I feel like it's a little more important for it to come across just the way I want it to. The guitar sound is something I pay a lot of attention to. A lot of the mainstream alternative stuff sounds almost drum-heavy to me. I think a lot of times producers lay the guitars a little low in order to stay ear-friendly. A real good example is that song "Zombie," by the Cranberries, which has this ultra-distorted guitar mixed *way* low. I really wanted the guitars to be a real up-front thing. That's always been the nature of punk music. When we go in, we record guitars on six tracks. We double and triple them sometimes. When we record the guitars, we close-mic the cabinets and use a room mic as well. Then we'll double that and, between Noodles and me, sometimes we triple guitar tracks.

**GW:** How do you arrange your guitar parts to complement what Noodles is playing?

**HOLLAND:** I usually don't play a full barre chord. When you want something to sound punchy, sometimes less is more. I find that to be the case a lot with punk rock. So the Ibanez is a nice guitar for me—it's real punchy and concise. I use a Mesa/Boogie head, which drives a cabinet loaded with two Celestion and two EV speakers. The EV's have a much tighter low-end response than the Celestions, so they keep everything really punchy. I only really play the bottom three strings—I don't play the full six, usually. You know that fourth string, the one that makes the chord go either major or minor? Personally, it's always bugged me—I don't like it either way. I prefer to mute the string altogether. Noodles plays the full barre chord and that rounds out the sound a little bit. I think what he does is make it a little bit more raw around the edges, because he does play the full chord. He's used an Epiphone and now he's coming around to using an Ibanez, too.

Actually, for about half the record I played a guitar by Tom Anderson, a guy

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who makes his own guitars for Mesa/Boogie and sells them in stores. That guitar had a really great sound, too, and I really liked it. But I've been playing Ibanez for a number of years. When they approached us for an endorsement, I gladly accepted, since I'd already been playing them. They were willing to spend a lot of time with us. Noodles also found some Ibanez guitars that he liked, so he's come around.

**GW:** Everybody focuses on the middle-Eastern riff in "Come Out And Play," but they tend to ignore the really cool chunky part that the guitars are playing underneath.

**HOLLAND:** Well, thanks! When you're concerned with conserving real estate, one of the things you can do is mute the guitar. The riff is like something I've heard on hip-hop records and Depeche Mode songs. It's kind of a common riff. It's a combination of muting and really trying to get the guitars dialed in and the way the producer got it to sound. Yeah, thanks, I really like the way that sounds, too.

There really were no effects on the record. I just kind of played straight through the amp. The attitude of the whole band is a no-frills, no-bullshit kind of thing anyway, so it's the way we play and arrange the guitars that define the sound. When we were formulating our sound, we realized that you didn't really hear bands mute their guitars a lot. And to me, muting seemed really cool—it allows you to hear the song really well, let the song get going. And when you finally pull into a full barre chord, it's a real release. That's something I wanted to experiment with, and we gave ourselves our own sound by doing it.

**GW:** Why don't you want to have a songbook of *Smash* published?

**HOLLAND:** It just doesn't feel right to me now. When I think of songbooks, I think of bands like Led Zeppelin, and I don't feel like we're that kind of band. I do have an appreciation for the fact that guitar players want to learn the songs and I think that's really cool. I may do a complete 180 by the time our next record comes out, but right now, where we came from, it seems really strange for me to have a whole songbook full of our songs with glossy photos of us in between. Transcriptions per se, I don't have a problem with.

**GW:** Does the songbook issue come down to what we were talking about before, where you're not sure whether your songs work on acoustic guitar?

**HOLLAND:** Actually, yeah. It kind of seems silly to me. You're supposed to be really *important* before you do something like that. I don't really feel that important yet.

**GW:** *Yet?*

**HOLLAND:** Well, I don't know. We're trying. [*laughs*]

**GW:** It's important to be important!

**HOLLAND:** [*laughs*] I guess so...

**GW:** You're a doctoral candidate. How do you carry on with that and do the band as well?

**HOLLAND:** It really wasn't that hard. We always treated the band as a side thing, a hobby thing, which kept it all really fun for us. It was something that we did on the weekends, in our spare time. If you have a job, it's a real good place to do songwriting. It depends on the kind of job you have, but a lot of people who are stuck in mundane jobs could really use it to their advantage, by putting themselves on autopilot and thinking about songs. That's what I did. I used to work in a lab and a lot of the work was really tedious, so I just made up songs the whole time I was at work. So it's a matter of using your time as best you can.

**GW:** What about now?

**HOLLAND:** I had to take a leave of absence. I haven't been to school in six months.

**GW:** Does the punk explosion have any significance beyond being a hot new musical trend?

**HOLLAND:** Punk was always reserved for the few, for the outskirts of society. I think it really says something now that those kinds of ideas are becoming acceptable to the mainstream.

**GW:** Why are they acceptable to the mainstream now?

**HOLLAND:** A lot of punk is very skeptical. Ten years ago, with Ronald Reagan politics, there was still a Puritan work ethic—go to your job and go to school and everything will be fine. I think people are realizing that it's just not that way any more. You can go to college and not be able to get any kind of job. Now, both partners have to get a job just to make ends meet. So I think a lot of kids are growing up and realizing that, and they don't even want to try any more. They just want to work in McDonald's and smoke pot. The discontent and the disenchantment with what's going on in America make them able to relate in a real broad, mainstream kind of way to the kind of music that's coming out now. That's my little two-bit sociological analysis of it.

**GW:** I have the feeling that a lot of people don't really get what you're saying in "Come Out And Play."

**HOLLAND:** People come up to me all the time and ask what "keep 'em separated" means. It kind of amazes me because if they'd only read the lyric sheet, the songs would be pretty obvious. To me, it's fairly obvious that "Come Out And Play" is an anti-gang song, but it's not always taken

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that way. Maybe that's part of the charm of a song—you never know for sure quite what to make of it.

**GW:** You've become very successful very quickly. A lot of new bands have complained about the downside of sudden success. How are you bearing up?

**HOLLAND:** There are some things that aren't so great. Some real idiots come to shows sometimes—the whole jock mentality is...I mean the whole attitude of *Smash* is against something like that. Having people like that in our audience can sometimes be a bummer. Being misunderstood about songs can be a bummer sometimes, too. But in general, most bands *dream* of doing something like this. It wasn't our goal to "make it," but I feel real fortunate that people enjoy listening to us. I feel very humble about it, very lucky that anyone at all wanted to buy our record. So I'm not going to bitch about selling a lot of records. I don't think that's the right way to handle it.

**GW:** But having people burrow into your personal life...

**HOLLAND:** As a band, we try to keep things a little more low-profile. We haven't done all the magazines and TV that everybody does. I think we've managed to keep a little more privacy than most bands who allow themselves to be a little more seen.

**GW:** For instance, you didn't want to be on the cover of Guitar World.

**HOLLAND:** For a long time, we didn't want to do covers. We didn't want to do TV and stuff because I didn't want the hype of the band to outpace what we really are. Like Liz Phair was on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, and there was a big hype about her and I don't feel like the record is following through. It's not a bad record, but it was heralded as being the next big thing and it didn't work out that way. And if that had happened to me, I just would have felt dumb. We'd just wind up being considered this next big thing that didn't happen. When we do things that are big exposure, I really want to feel like it's justified.

**GW:** Was metal an ingredient in your stew of musical influences?

**HOLLAND:** Okay, I confess. Kiss was my favorite band when I was a kid. My older brother was into metal. There are some great metal records, like Van Halen's first album. The thing about metal is, a lot of the metal bands embodied something that punk was completely anti to. It was just cheesy to me. They just didn't talk about things that were relevant to me, so I grew to really hate metal. Especially for what it became in the Eighties. It just became very generic-sounding—Dio, Dokken, all that stuff. Then the glam metal thing came out, Guns N' Roses came along, and it almost seemed rejuvenated. Guns N' Roses' first record was pretty good. But even that became very stale and all fashion, no substance. We've always stuck with punk rock because it's always made the most sense to us.

**GW:** When you first started out, you could probably hang out with just about anyone who came to your shows—they were probably pretty similar to you in a lot of ways. That's not true anymore.

**HOLLAND:** I would never be so elitist that I'd say, "This person is cool enough to listen to our music and this person isn't." If people buy our record and get into it, I think that's great. It's cool that they're willing to give something a chance, and they should be congratulated for it. But yeah, I see people that I don't think I would have anything in common with. Last night we went out to a club and they played "Come Out And Play," and people danced to it. *That*, I think, is pretty strange. There was this truck driver guy dancing who looked like he'd just as soon be line dancing to country music, and it just freaked me out. This is a guy I probably wouldn't get along with *at all*. And yet he's dancing to my music. The thing is, the music transcends what goes on with me or with other people. It's something they identify with, though I don't exactly understand it. Sometimes it almost makes me uncomfortable, but if that's the way it is, then so be it. ●

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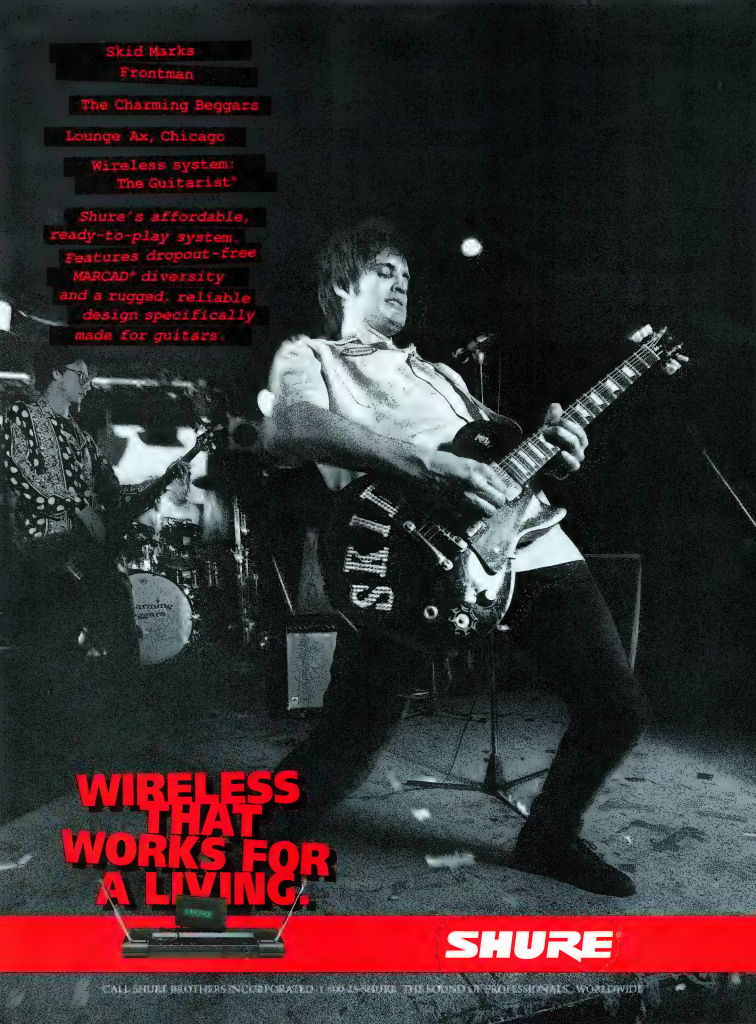
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1995 WEEZER

# Man of Steel

BY TOM BEAUJOUR

**His black, horn-rimmed glasses and mild manner notwithstanding, Weezer's Rivers Cuomo may just be power pop's next superhero.**

RIVERS CUOMO IS peeved. In three hours, he and his Weezer bandmates will be performing for the first time ever at New York's Madison Square Garden. Also on the bill are the likes of Green Day, Candlebox and, yes, Bon Jovi. So what's to be peeved about? Earlier in the day, Weezer were forced to postpone their soundcheck five times as brawnier, more established bands bullied their way onto the stage.

"It sucked!" says Cuomo, Weezer's vocalist/lead guitarist/songwriter. "Richie Sambora

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was up there noodling for like an hour! They sort of tacked us onto the bill, so we're definitely the low band on the totem pole."

Rivers, dressed in a cardigan, a plaid shirt, and a pair of very sensible brown moccasins, looks like a collegiate chess enthusiast; it's easy to see why the ever-beefy Sambora and his equally broad-chested bandmates didn't think twice about cutting in front of Weezer. Yet, despite Cuomo and Co.'s understated appearance and bashful demeanor, they are a musical force to be reckoned with. *Weezer* (Geffen), the band's infectious debut, is a sharply focused pop statement where "all of the songs were written around a clear idea of what the whole album should be like," says Cuomo. In Weezer's case, artistic merit has translated into commercial success; on the strength of the minimalist "Undone—The Sweater Song" and "Buddy Holly," a heartfelt paean to rock's prototypical nerd-genius, *Weezer* has been certified gold and continues to scale the charts.

Rivers Cuomo has never been one to shy away from a tough decision. A self-confessed ex-shredder and metalhead, he moved to L.A. with his high school band at the tender age of 19. After that band's demise, Cuomo made the drastic (and timely) decision to renounce his aspirations as a shredder and sever his metal roots. In an equally intrepid (and unusual) move, despite Weezer's current string of hits, he plans to take time off from the band to hit the books and return to college for a semester. Like a rock and roll Clark Kent, Rivers Cuomo is a man who conceals his powers well.

Maybe Richie and Jon should be more careful about who they push around.

**GUITAR WORLD:** Are you aware that you were among the leading vote-getters in the Best New Talent Category of this year's Guitar World Readers Poll?

**RIVERS CUOMO:** I heard. That's pretty cool.

**GW:** Do you find it ironic that you did so well, years after you gave up shredding?

**CUOMO:** It's so ironic, I laugh about it all the time. My whole band is laughing at me, because, at one point, getting in one of those polls as a "Hot New Guitar Player" was probably what I wanted more than anything else. Now, I just use the guitar as a tool to tell me what notes to sing; it gives me a little background. I don't really care about my reputation as a guitar player at all.

**GW:** When you're up on stage, don't you ever feel like letting loose and shredding?

**CUOMO:** Yeah, if I'm in a bad mood or if I feel like punishing the audience. We've been known to play [*Iron Maiden's*] "Run To The Hills" or [*Quiet Riot's*] "Metal Health"—any number of the old classics.

**GW:** You've done "Metal Health" live?

**CUOMO:** Yeah, just about every night, actually.

**GW:** Were you the type of guitarist who practiced at least five hours a day?

**CUOMO:** Yeah, totally. I locked myself in my room and went [*sings a flurry of notes*], with a metronome and all that stuff. Then, when I was 19 or so, my priorities changed. I got more interested in writing songs and dropped the guitar altogether for a long time.

**GW:** Did you pick up another instrument?

**CUOMO:** No. Actually, I was just going to college as an English major. I'd pick up the guitar sometimes, just to strum chords and come up with a melody or something, but I stopped practicing. I mean, I haven't practiced a scale since the Eighties.

**GW:** Do you feel that the time you spent practicing was wasted, or do you rely on what you learned once in a while?

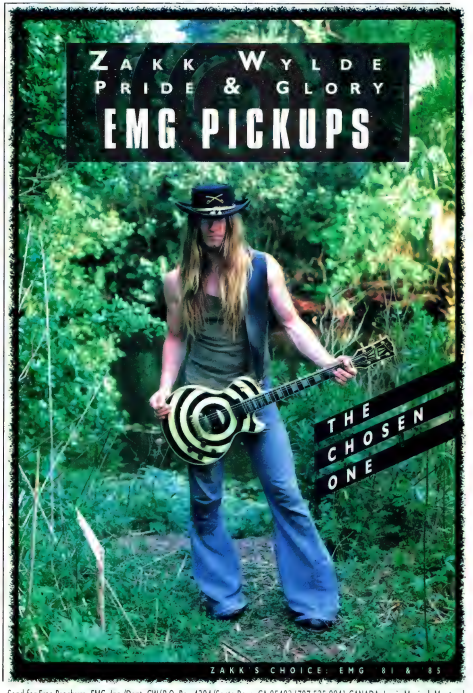
**CUOMO:** No, I don't rely on it. But I don't think it was time wasted, because it's still with me to a certain degree. I almost wish it wasn't there, since it's probably more detrimental than anything else.

**GW:** Who were your formative guitar influences?

**CUOMO:** Well, the first one, of course, was Ace Frehley. He was just God, because all of his solos were so memorable and singable. They had form to them; they'd start out low and go up high...They were just great, compact little emotional things.

**GW:** You're only 24, so you must have gotten into Kiss a little late in the game.

**CUOMO:** I was totally secluded as a kid and



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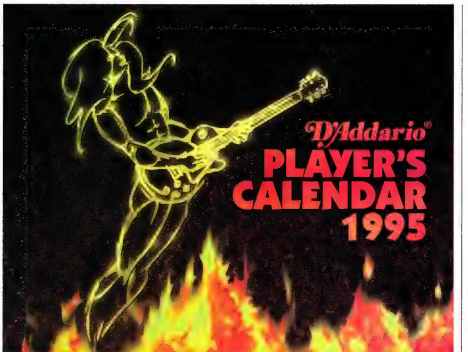


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didn't know about pop music at all, except that somehow I got hold of Kiss' *Rock And Roll Over* when I was seven. From there, I got interested in all their other records. Pretty much all the music I listened to was Kiss.

I started listening to the radio a little later on. Back in 1982 or '83, the classic rock stations would occasionally play Iron Maiden or Judas Priest, and I was like, "Wow, this sounds great!" so I got those albums, too. Those guitar players ripped my head off—they were great. And then eventually I discovered some of the cooler stuff when I got out to L.A., like Joey Santiago from the Pixies. Obviously, I've ripped him off a lot.

**GW:** What other—for lack of a better word—"alternative" guitar players are you into?

**CUOMO:** Well, the Velvet Underground, of course. And I dig Brian May.

**GW:** Do you think it's important for someone who's just starting out to go back and explore the past, to supplement their diet of new bands like Weezer?

**CUOMO:** Oh, totally. Well, I don't know, actually. If you want to be a really well-rounded, well-cultured 13-year-old, yeah, I guess so. But if you're 13, and you're just picking up the electric guitar, you should just go crazy. At some point, though, you've got to go back and listen to the classic stuff.

**GW:** Where did you grow up?

**CUOMO:** I grew up in rural Connecticut.

**GW:** What do your parents do?

**CUOMO:** Well, at the time they ran a massage school. [*laughs*] They're basically ex-hippies, so I'm the son of ex-hippies. In rural Connecticut, you basically have classic rock and that's about it. And classic rock just wasn't hard enough for me. But Tuesday nights at eight o'clock, they'd have the Crunch Hour on WCCC—Deep Purple and stuff like that.

**GW:** As ex-hippies, were your parents able to identify with the music you listened to?

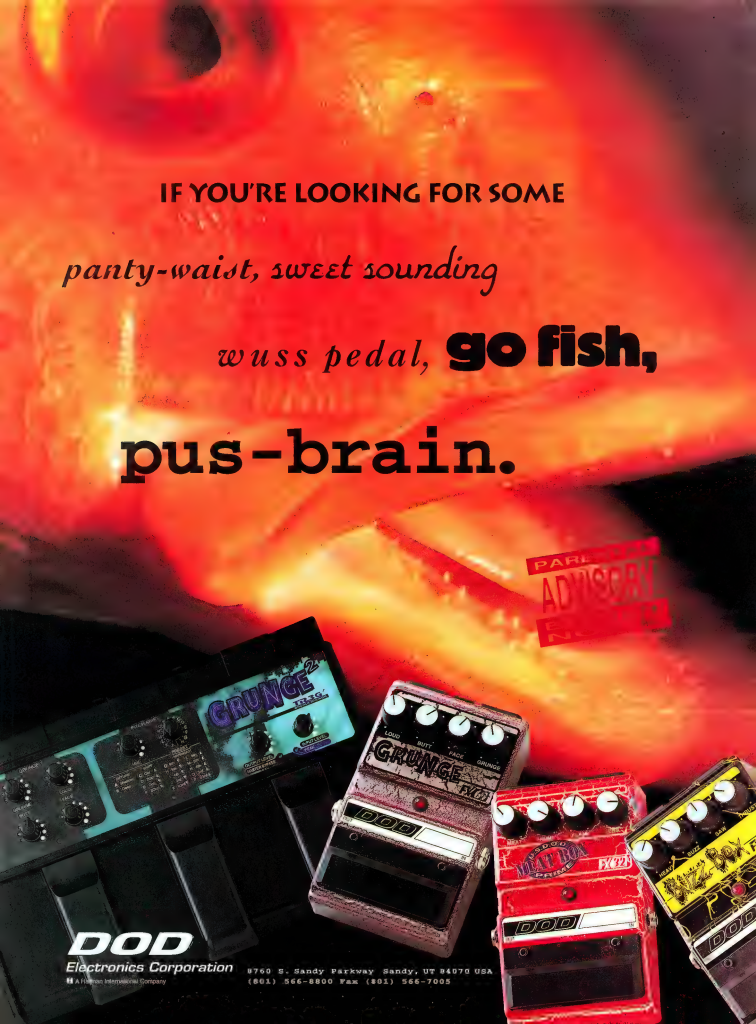
**CUOMO:** I tried to turn my mom on to Ace Frehley. I'd play her the "Shock Me" solo from *Alive II* because I just thought that was the greatest. She told me that it sounded like a dying cat. [*laughs*]

**GW:** How old were you when you actually started playing the guitar?

**CUOMO:** I can't remember—I think it was right before ninth grade. In eighth grade, I saw my friend's band play for a class night. They played "Metal Health" and, man, it just blew me away. So I went out and got a guitar for my birthday.

**GW:** What kind of guitar was it?

**CUOMO:** It was just a crappy Strat copy, kind of like the one I have now, actually. Then I went through a bunch of metal guitars, like a Guild Flying Star, which is possibly one of the worst guitars ever made. It kind of looks like a B.C. Rich Ironbird. What a terrible, terrible instrument. And then I got a Charvel Model Two. I liked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that, but I hate it now, of course.

**GW:** Were you a cool kid in school?

**CUOMO:** No, I had a very small group of really close friends, and we were all metalheads—the only ones in the whole school. Those four years were really trying, what with the jocks and what we called the grits—the VoAg people...

**GW:** What's VoAg?

**CUOMO:** Vocational Agriculture. It was *huge* at my school. We had one of the best departments in the country. But anyways, the jocks and the VoAg kids all *hated* us because we had long hair and wore ripped jeans and Metallica patches on our denim jackets and stuff. They despised us!

**GW:** I gather you didn't play sports.

**CUOMO:** Well, that's an interesting story: In our senior year, that close group of metalhead friends I mentioned all got together and said, "Let's play a sport, dammit. It's been four years and we haven't done anything." So we formed a lacrosse team. None of us had ever played lacrosse before, of course, so it was a disaster.

We only got to play two games and they were against like junior varsity teams or whatever, and they killed us. It was really awful, but it was a lot of fun.

**GW:** So by then you must have had at least 10 metalheads in your clique.

**CUOMO:** By senior year we had spread the word.

**GW:** Do you have siblings?

**CUOMO:** Yeah. One of those close friends is my brother, Leaves. He's a year younger than me. He actually just came up on stage in Cleveland and played on a song with us.

**GW:** Does he also play in a band?

**CUOMO:** No, not any more. He's just going to graduate school at the University of Michigan, studying environmental science. But we were in bands together as teenagers. Our first band was called Fury, and we played all Kiss covers. We did it album by album. First, we learned all of the songs off the first record and played only those songs, and so on.

**GW:** Did you play all the songs in the sequence of the album?

**CUOMO:** I don't think we went that far. But somehow, I got to play Ace Frehley's guitar parts but sing Paul Stanley's songs.

**GW:** Your brother sang Gene's songs?

**CUOMO:** No, he didn't get to sing at all. [*laughs*] He just played Paul Stanley's rhythm parts. There are certain advantages to being the older brother.

**GW:** What's a "Weezer"?

**CUOMO:** I don't know. People ask me that all the time.

**GW:** You must know where the word came from.

**CUOMO:** Well, I mean of course I know where the word "Weezer" came from, but I can't tell you.

**GW:** Is it a band secret?

**CUOMO:** Yeah. [*laughing*] You've got to have something.

**GW:** Will you take it to your grave?

**CUOMO:** Yeah, I think so. But if I was going to reveal it, it would be in Guitar World. [*We suspect the name was lifted from a Little Rascals character—GW Ed.*]

**GW:** Why did you decide to move to L.A.?

**CUOMO:** That's where all the cool bands were coming from. [*Smiles*] For example, Ratt, Mötley Crüe and Quiet Riot.

**GW:** When did you move?

**CUOMO:** I arrived there March 5, 1989.

**GW:** Did you move out there with your band?

**CUOMO:** Yeah, we all moved out there and played a couple of shows. Then we fell apart really quickly.

**GW:** What happened?

**CUOMO:** It's really harsh, just getting out of high school and moving to a crappy one-room apartment in L.A. with 50,000 roaches. Five guys in one room with no money. It was really hard. Some people just gave up and went back to Connecticut. That's when I got the crazy idea of starting to sing and write songs, instead of just being a guitar player. I started to do that on my own.

**GW:** What was the band you moved to California with called?

**CUOMO:** I'll never tell you! [*laughs*] That's

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an even darker secret than the origin of "Weezer."

**GW:** Just give me a hint—did the name have misspelled words in it, like "Slik" with a K?

**CUOMO:** No, no, it wasn't that. In defense of our horrible style, at least we weren't glammy. We were very heavy and aggressive.

**GW:** What well-known bands were you most influenced by?

**CUOMO:** That's as far as I'm going to go... Well, I'll give you a hint. There's another metal band from Connecticut, who still are around actually—still making records and going on tour. They were a big influence on us because they were from Connecticut.

**GW:** A well-known band?

**CUOMO:** You've probably heard of them.

**GW:** What, like Krokus? No, Krokus were Swiss.

**CUOMO:** Not as big as Krokus was. They were on Metal Blade for the longest time.

**GW:** Vain?

**CUOMO:** No.

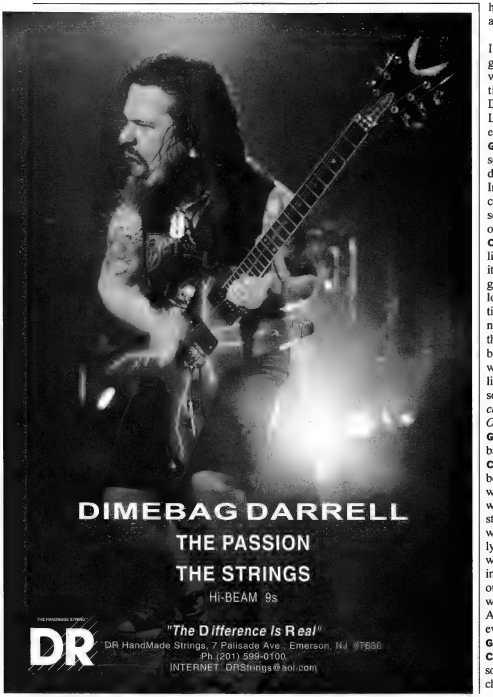
**GW:** Oh! Fates Warning!

**CUOMO:** You got it! I took guitar lessons from Jim Matheos, their guitar player.

**GW:** What was that like?

**CUOMO:** Kick-ass. I would try and figure out all their songs, and he'd just write them out in tablature for me.

**GW:** Would you recommend the move to L.A. to other aspiring musicians?




**CUOMO:** I would, because you get exposed to all different kinds of music. If you're way out in the middle of nowhere, you could be doing something completely stupid and no one will ever tell you, because they don't know the difference. If you're in L.A. and you're doing something stupid, everyone's going to tell you. It's really hard, and it's humiliating, and it's tough to get it going, but it helps to be in a major musical center like L.A..

**GW:** When was Weezer formed?

**CUOMO:** Our first rehearsal was on February 14, 1992. Me and [*drummer*] Pat Wilson had been writing songs for a few months before that. We wanted to write a bunch of tunes before we even played together, so that we could have an idea of where we were heading before we started wasting our time and money paying for a rehearsal studio.

I didn't want to get back into a band until I felt like I had a bunch of songs that were good and that had a cohesive style. So I just wrote songs and didn't play at all for a long time. "Undone," "Jonas," "Only In Dreams" and "The World Has Turned And Left Me Here" were all written before we ever played together.

**GW:** One of the things that makes Weezer songs more interesting that most is that you don't rely exclusively on root/fifth chords. Instead, you use thirds and other intervals to create voice-leading melodies. Is this a conscious effort on your part or more the result of a happy accident?

**CUOMO:** It is a conscious thing, but it's not like we've studied our voice-leading rules; it's more just what feels neat under the fingers. We try to keep all the voicings really low to give us a crunchy sound. A lot of times, the most important thing is the bass note—the lowest note on the guitar or what the bass is playing; instead of the root, it will be the third or the fifth. We'll throw in a walking line or something to give the bass line a little more interest and to make it not sound so "duhn-nuh-nuh-nuh." [*Sings typical punk/hardcore bassline, resembling the Offspring's "Self Esteem."*]

**GW:** Was it difficult to be an "alternative" band in L.A.?

**CUOMO:** It was really strange at first, because the whole Sunset Strip scene, which was basically bands just arriving from Idaho who play like Poison or Guns N' Roses, was still happening. The whole rest of the city was copying the Seattle sound, so it was really hard to find a niche. We'd end up playing with all these other bands that sounded nothing like us. We'd play a gig every week without fail, and it was really depressing because we just weren't building a following at all. And then record companies started coming, even still before we had a following.

**GW:** The labels just got wind of you?

**CUOMO:** Yeah. The way it works in L.A. is as soon as one company finds out and comes to check you out, they all find out and go crazy.

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**GW:** Was Weezer the subject of a label bidding war?

**CUOMO:** No. I'm not saying the labels are willing to give you a lot of money. They're just willing to take you out to dinner, kiss your ass and make you feel like a rock star. But as it turns out, 90 percent of those companies then hear your tape and see you live and say, "You guys suck!" They express all kinds of interest, and suddenly they just turn around and act like they never knew you. One of the very few companies to actually stick with it was Geffen.

**GW:** What kind of music are you listening to now?

**CUOMO:** I don't know why it is, maybe because I'm constantly surrounded by all this modern music and pressure to write new songs, but for some reason I only listen to classical music.

**GW:** In our last interview [*Tune Ups, Dec. '94*], you said that you stayed in college right up until you recorded *Weezer*.

**CUOMO:** I was still in school on May 10, when the record came out. I brought it into class and said, "Look everybody." They were all like, "Yeah, cool, whatever."

I was at community college in Los Angeles. I'd finished up my two years and was going to transfer to U.C. Berkeley, but I got a record deal.

**GW:** Do you miss college?

**CUOMO:** I really do. I just applied for fall '95 to U.C. Berkeley. I was an English major, but since then I've really gotten into classical music, so maybe I'll do music.

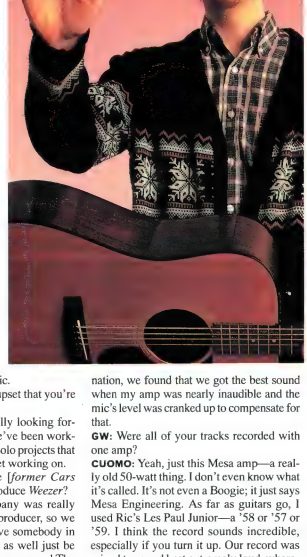
**GW:** Is the rest of the band upset that you're planning to take time off?

**CUOMO:** No! We're all really looking forward to a break, because we've been working non-stop. Everyone has solo projects that they're all really dying to get working on.

**GW:** Why did you choose [*former Cars frontman*] Ric Ocasek to produce *Weezer?*

**CUOMO:** The record company was really pushing to us work with a producer, so we figured that if we had to have somebody in the studio with us, it might as well just be someone who writes good songs—and The Cars' first record just rules. We sent Ric a tape and he called right back and said, "You guys are great. I want to work with you."

Ric was also one of the only producers who had any interest in us at all, so it was kind of an easy choice.



**GW:** Was working with him everything that you had hoped for?

**CUOMO:** Well, we weren't asking for a lot, actually. We were just looking for somebody to give us advice if we needed it, and to not get in the way. And that's what he did. He was always right behind me, to my right. And if I was ever stuck and needed an idea, I'd say, "Ric, what should I do here?" And he'd always have a good suggestion.

**GW:** The guitars on *Weezer* achieve maximum crunch without sounding harsh or buzzy. How did you get that sound?

**CUOMO:** After trying every possible combination, we found that we got the best sound when my amp was nearly inaudible and the mic's level was cranked up to compensate for that.

**GW:** Were all of your tracks recorded with one amp?

**CUOMO:** Yeah, just this Mesa amp—a really old 50-watt thing. I don't even know what it's called. It's not even a Boogie; it just says Mesa Engineering. As far as guitars go, I used Ric's Les Paul Junior—a '58 or '57 or '59. I think the record sounds incredible, especially if you turn it up. Our record was mixed to sound best extremely loud, whereas most records today are meant to sound good at a low volume, like if you just hear them casually on the radio or something. Our record sounds like crap if you have it low.

**GW:** Were the early-Eighties-style keyboard sounds on the album Ric's idea?

**CUOMO:** No, everyone thinks that's Ric's fault, but it's really mine. In fact, he hated the keyboards and asked me to take them off. I said, "No way. I know they suck, but they're staying on there."

**GW:** You recorded *Weezer* almost a year-and-a-half ago. At this point, are you tired of playing those same 10 songs every night?

**CUOMO:** I was sick of playing them before we did our record! We practiced every night and played them out for a year before we even got a deal. Once you play a song a hundred times, you're pretty much sick of it. But tonight we're playing Madison Square Garden—there'll be twenty thousand people singing along to "The Sweater Song." It doesn't bother you so much when you hear all those people getting excited.

**GW:** Are there any plans to record a second album yet?

**CUOMO:** It's not looking good; we're planning to tour through most of '95. Then if I go to school in the fall, I don't know *when* we'll record. Maybe next winter.

In any case, there are some good songs on the album that could still be singles and I'd rather not pass up any opportunity to release them because most people only know a band through their singles. And if you're releasing singles, you've got to be touring.

**GW:** Between the quirkiness of "The Sweater Song" and the goofiness of the "Buddy Holly" video, do you worry that Weezer might come to be viewed as a humor/joke band?

**CUOMO:** Yeah, that would be a bummer. But I think they're going to release "Say It Ain't So" next, and hopefully that'll help. The thing is, when you go to do a video, you start out with a serious idea and you think the song is serious. But then something happens, and your video just goes crazy and ends up being really funny. If you take a video too seriously, it just comes out like crap. I don't know if there has ever been a good serious rock video. I guess some people like "Jeremy" by Pearl Jam, but that just couldn't be us. If we did that it would be terrible.

**GW:** Was it your or [*acclaimed video director*] Spike Jonze's idea to film "Buddy Holly" as though it were an episode of *Happy Days*?

**CUOMO:** That was Spike Jonze's. He also directed the "Undone" video. He doesn't suck, unlike just about every other video director. We asked him to do the "Buddy Holly" video. He called up a couple days later and said, "I got a good idea." And he told us that idea and it's like, "Yeah. That rules." Now Henry Winkler's going to introduce us at our next show in L.A.

**GW:** Are you going to call your next album *Weezer II*?

**CUOMO:** [*laughs*] We've thought about it. Actually, we thought about that and *Back For More, Back For The Attack*...

**GW:** Dokken!

**CUOMO:** *Return To The Scene Of The Crime, Repeat Offender*—names like that. ●

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1995 CANDLEBOX

# WAX TRAX

**Candlebox' Peter Klett demonstrates some of the Classic Rock-styled licks that helped earn him Best New Talent honors in Guitar World's 1995 Readers Poll.**

PETER KLETT IS WALKING AROUND IN A DREAM. HIS BAND, CANDLEBOX, IS ONE OF THE HOTTEST ACTS IN THE COUNTRY, WITH THREE SOLID SINGLES—"YOU," "CHANGE," AND THE BREAKTHROUGH HIT "FAR BEHIND"—PUSHING ITS EPONYMOUS DEBUT PAST THE TRIPLE-PLATINUM MARK AND INTO PARTS UNKNOWN. IT'S A DREAM, BUT A DREAM AS REAL AS THIS MORNING'S BREAKFAST.

"I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT TOO MUCH," THE GUITARIST SAYS WITH A NERVOUS LAUGH. "BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BECOME AN ARROGANT ASSHOLE. I PRETEND IT'S NOT THERE, AND I JUST KEEP DOIN' WHAT I

BY ANDY ALEDORT

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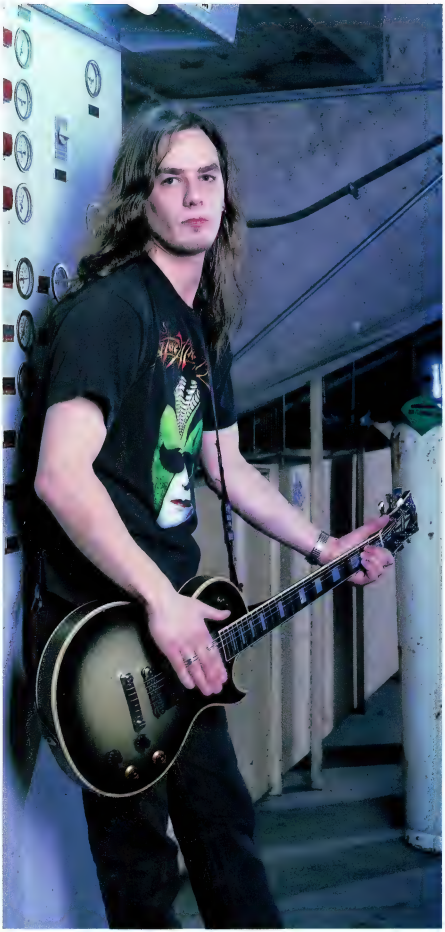


James Bland

love. At the risk of sounding big-headed, I've always been confident that we would become a big band. I felt so good about the music. I thought it had a *glow* to it. And now, it's like, 'Wow, it really happened!'"

Candlebox' massive success can certainly be attributed, in part, to the incendiary guitar work of axeman Klett. Armed with his stock Les Paul Standard, which he plays through Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifiers and a Mesa/Boogie Triaxis, Peter spins metal-edged, bluesy solos which evoke such rock superheroes as Angus Young, Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix and David Gilmour, for whom Peter has a special affinity. "Gilmour is just so soulful," he says. "His solos are fucking beautiful. He's the best; there's simply nobody better." Other influences he cites are Robin Trower, Michael Schenker and Ronnie Montrose.

Peter's own well-developed and deeply emotional playing style expresses a musical maturity beyond his 26 years. It's a style that has now taken him to the top of the Best New Talent heap in Guitar World's prestigious Readers Poll.

"No way!" shouts an incredulous Klett upon learning the good news. "You've got to be kidding. That blows me away. To be chosen out of all the guitar players that are out there...well, that's flattering as fuck! I can't even believe it."

When his elation subsides, Klett offers a characteristically thoughtful appraisal of his triumph. "I think a lot of my appeal to other guitar players comes from the fact that I'm doing what I want to do. And I also think that *any* guitar player is going to sound different, if they allow themselves to get out of the shell of whatever's hip and going on. It's a very emotional thing for me; I'm not just picking the guitar up and playing. I'm actually *living* inside of it, as cheesy or corny as that might sound. It's total emotion."

After successful stints opening for the likes of Rush, Metallica and Living Colour, plus a stellar performance at Woodstock '94 that helped cement their new-found rep, Candlebox are currently back out on the road. This spring, they will reenter the studio to record what is becoming a hotly anticipated sophomore effort. We caught up with Peter in Atlanta, Georgia, following an afternoon soundcheck, for an exclusive, in-depth lesson focusing on *Candlebox'* many guitar highlights.

**GUITAR WORLD:** Do you have a regular, perhaps daily, practice regimen?

**PETER KLETT:** Not really. I rarely bring the guitar up to my room to practice before a show. I usually just warm up with a bunch of blues lick like this. **[FIGURE 1]** That was just some blues stuff in E. I don't have any kind of practice ritual or anything.

**GW:** Who were your main influences for soloing?

**KLETT:** Angus Young, David Gilmour, and, really, everything in between. I used to crank on Iron Maiden stuff all the time; there was a lot of bluesy phrasing in their playing, with hammer-ons and pull-offs. **[FIGURE 2]**

**GW:** That reminds me of some of the riffs in your "No Sense" solo.

**KLETT:** Yeah; that solo is along those same lines. That comes from the influence of the Doors, and Santana, too. As far as Santana goes, I only owned one of his albums, *Marathon* (1979), and the only song I listened to was called "Aquamarine." I had to sell the album when I was broke, and I haven't bought it back yet! [*laughs*] It's a good one, though. With the Doors, I pretty much like anything and everything they did. I don't necessarily like the Doors for the guitar work as much as for the overall sound of the band.

**GW:** Did you pick that stuff up by ear, or are you aware of what modes those riffs are based on?

**KLETT:** No, I just try to find the right key. [*laughs*] Blues licks are so easy because, if the song goes from a B chord to an A chord to an E chord, in the main key of B, you can pretty much just sit there and jam up in the "B square" **[FIGURE 3]** the whole time.

**GW:** Did you learn to play the guitar from picking licks off of records, and is that something that you still do today?

**KLETT:** I don't really have the time to do it anymore, but that's how I taught myself how to play. I'd sit in my room and put on an album, and I'd either learn the licks or just jam to it. Some of my favorite records to play to were *Fire Down Under*, by Riot, and a lot of Iron Maiden. Sometimes I goof on Maiden's "Number Of The Beast" during the set.

And I love David Gilmour. I like to jam to a couple of his solos, like those in "Time," "Comfortably Numb" and the one in "Another Brick In The Wall, Part II." I liked to get the solos down note for note, so I'd set my CD player on A-B [*continuous repeat*], and listen to the solos over and over.

**GW:** Do you guys tune down one half-step?

**KLETT:** No. We generally tune normally, but I do drop my low E string down to D for a few songs: "Change," "No Sense," "Don't You," "Blossom," "He

FIGURE 1
Warm-up Blues Licks In E
♩ = 132

FIGURE 2
♩ = 100
Em

FIGURE 3
"B Square"
B Blues Scale
7 fr

FIGURE 4
♩ = 112
Dm

FIGURE 5 "Dropped D" tuning
♩ = 126
Dm
Cmaj7

FIGURE 6

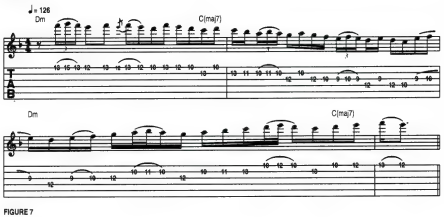
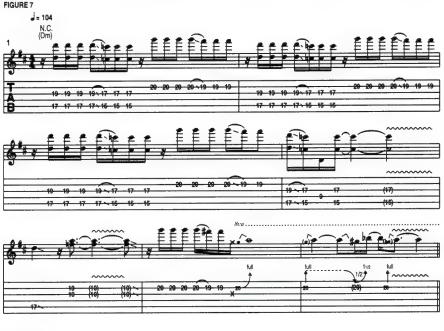



FIGURE 7

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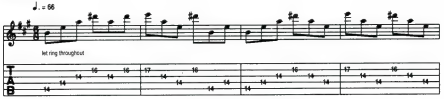
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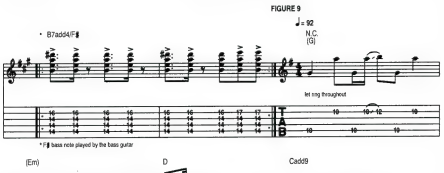


## CANDLEBOX

Calls Home" and "Mother's Dream."

**GW:** Do you still have guitar heroes that you aspire to be as good as?

**KLETT:** David Gilmour would be the one. I dig his fluidity, and he's so soulful. He just hits that one note, and you can't help but listen to the solo. I've heard all his solos a million times, and they still give me goose bumps. I especially love the "Another Brick In The Wall, Part II" solo. I still practice that one! **[FIGURE 4]** His solos are fucking beautiful. He's the best; there's nobody better.

**GW:** One thing that sets you apart from other guitarists is the amount of space you use in your solos. You always sound very relaxed, and it doesn't seem like your intention is to show everyone how fast you can play.

**KLETT:** As a kid, I always wanted to be the real fast player. But I'm pretty lazy by nature, so I never bothered to go that far. Blues-type playing is easy because you can stay in one place on the neck, and still do so much. So many guitar virtuosos are up and down the neck—but not me. *[laughs]* In the song "You," for the end solo, I just hold one note for the whole last part of the song. I'd rather have the emotion in there than think about how many notes I can fit into a four-bar phrase.

**GW:** You also have a great vibrato—very slow and very big. How do you execute it?

**KLETT:** The vibrato itself comes from shaking my wrist. As far as the speed of my vibrato is concerned, I'm just kind of a laid back person, so I guess it reflects my personality. I just want it to sound *even*. For a long time I couldn't do it very well, but I just kept at it until it sounded the way I had it in my head. Some of my favorite vibratos on the album are on the song "Cover Me."

I also use three fingers—the ring, middle and index—to bend, then shake, a note. The two extra fingers help support the bend and give me more control over the pitch and speed of the vibrato.

**GW:** What guitar/amp setup did you use for the album?

**KLETT:** I didn't have my Mesa/Boogies, which I'm now using, yet, so I used my Peavey VTM 120 and a Marshall Mosfet 100. The two tones were different, but they blended well. One amp would sustain a note longer than the other, so I panned the amps left and right so the ends of the notes would go from left to right. And I played a Les Paul Standard for just about everything.

**GW:** As far as effects go, you use the wah-wah on a few spots on the record.

**KLETT:** I use it more for tone than for a "wah-wah-wah" kind of sound. I just put

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it in a certain position to get that one tone. It also gives you a little extra gain—it sustains the note longer, and that allows you to really dig deep. I use a Vox.

**GW:** Do you use any other effects?

**KLETT:** Just a couple of volume pedals, a chorus box to split my two heads, an Alesis Quadraverb, a Boss Super Distortion, a noise gate and an eq. That's pretty much it. I have a neat ping-pong delay that I use on this new song we've been playing, a real Pink Floyd/David Gilmour thing.

**GW:** You've talked about your favorite solos by other people. Do you have any favorite guitar parts from your own record?

**KLETT:** I like the "No Sense" solo, definitely. I love the opening guitar sound, too. I play the intro something like this. **[FIGURE 5]** This one uses dropped-D tuning [*low to high: D, A, D, G, B, E*]. Here's an example of what I play in the solo section. **[FIGURE 6]** My favorite is this first part, before it gets heavy.

The funny thing about that solo is that I was just goofing around. We were really recording the drum part, and I said, "Fuck it," and started playing this weird shit that isn't normal for me. When you listen, you can feel that I'm kind of behind the beat the whole time, always trying to catch up. That wasn't the solo that I planned to play, but I liked it so much that I decided to keep it. The whole time, Kevin [*Martin, vocalist*] was goofing on me, saying, "I am the Lizard King!" [*laughs*] In the heavy parts, there's a little bit of a Randy Rhoads influence. He was another big favorite of mine.

**GW:** Could you demo the beginning of the "Don't You" solo?

**KLETT:** It's an octave thing, beginning on the A and D strings. **[FIGURE 7]** I play octaves for the D and C notes, but then I just play single notes for G and F#. After going down to the 10th fret [*bar 5*], I shoot back up for the high G [*bar 6*].

**GW:** I like where you over-bend that G note an extra half-step, past A and up to Bb [*bar 7*].

**KLETT:** That's the Gilmour influence. He always takes the note just a *little* bit further up. It adds some flavor to it. I call those "stress points," where it smacks you straight in the heart.

**GW:** What's the opening chord in "Mother's Dream"?

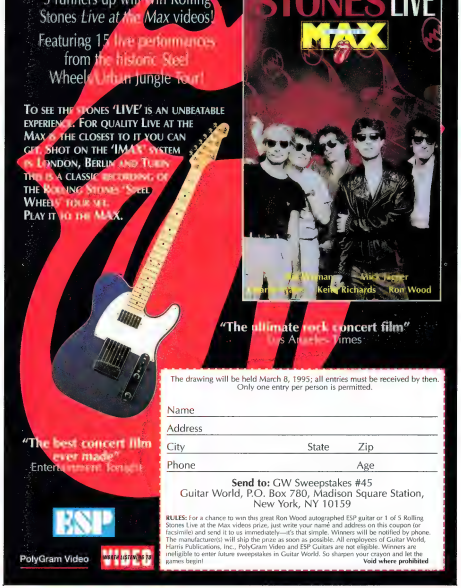
**KLETT:** I just kind of stumbled upon it. **[FIGURE 8]** I use dropped-D tuning on this song, but I don't hit the low string for this particular chord. I barre my index finger across the strings at the 14th fret, then put my ring finger on the B string at the 16th fret. I strum the inside four strings [*bar 5*], and then raise my ring finger up one fret [*bar 6*].

**GW:** How do you play the intro to "Far Behind"?

**KLETT:** This one starts with the middle finger on the 10th fret of the A string **[FIGURE 9]**, and the ring finger on the 10th fret of the B string. The ring finger slides from the 10th fret up to the 12th fret [*A to B*]. For the C chord [*bar 4*], I add my ring finger on the 3rd fret of the B string [*sounding Cadd9—GW Ed.*]. If you listen closely, you can hear a little Gilmour sneakin' in at the end of the solo!

**GW:** Do you have any particular goals as a guitar player?

**KLETT:** I've met my goals so far. I have ideas for what I'd like to do in the future, but right now I'm pretty much concentrating on Candlebox and getting our music out there. I'd like to get into soundtracks someday, and record music for really weird movies. And I'd like to last as a working musician because, often, when a band breaks up, the vocalist can keep going with another band, but it's harder for the other musicians to keep going unless they become singers, too. ●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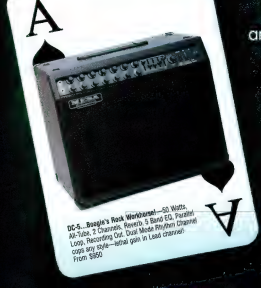

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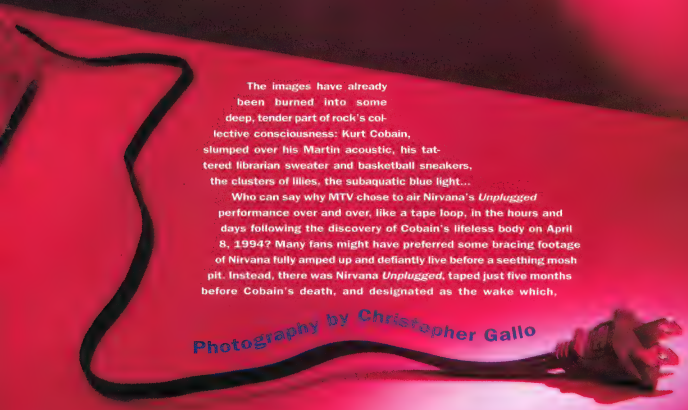
# season finale

## A behind-the-scenes look at Nirvana's brilliant performance on MTV's Unplugged.

By Alan di Perna



The images have already been burned into some deep, tender part of rock's collective consciousness: Kurt Cobain, slumped over his Martin acoustic, his tattered librarian sweater and basketball sneakers, the clusters of lilies, the subaquatic blue light...

Who can say why MTV chose to air Nirvana's *Unplugged* performance over and over, like a tape loop, in the hours and days following the discovery of Cobain's lifeless body on April 8, 1994? Many fans might have preferred some bracing footage of Nirvana fully amped up and defiantly live before a seething mosh pit. Instead, there was Nirvana *Unplugged*, taped just five months before Cobain's death, and designated as the wake which,

Photography by Christopher Gallo

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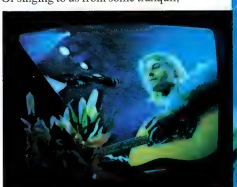
through its repeated showings served to diffuse the rock community's grief and shock. The recent release of Nirvana's *MTV Unplugged In New York*, the CD version of the television concert, was a mournful déjà vu experience for many. It has become impossible to hear this music outside the context of Cobain's terrible end.

Seen, again and again, in the hours after the artist's death, the somber MTV gig had an oddly lulling effect. It may have helped some viewers find a calm, quiet way to resign themselves to Cobain's violent departure. But the effect was pretty spooky, too. It was as if the guy was singing at his own funeral. Or singing to us from some tranquil, blue world beyond our own.



**"They were really nervous about doing Unplugged, because they were leaving themselves wide open."**

An eerie coincidence? Probably. But of the six cover songs Cobain chose to sing that evening, five mention death in some way. And the lilies, candles and heavy drapery that adorned the *Unplugged* set that night were all chosen by Cobain. In fact, when *Unplugged* producer Alex Coletti showed the Nirvana leader some preliminary sketches for the stage set, Kurt called for more flowers, more candles.

"You mean like a funeral?" Coletti asked.

"Yeah," replied Cobain.

"I don't want to read too much into it," says Coletti in retrospect, "but that memory sure spooked me out a couple of months later."

Apart from any of the show's real or imaginary morbid overtones, for Cobain, the opportunity to do MTV *Unplugged* may well have meant the confirmation of his arrival as an important rock songwriter. "I'm embarrassed saying this, but I'd like to be recognized more as a songwriter," Cobain told *Details* magazine in November of '93. "I don't pay attention to polls and charts, but I thumb through them once in while and see, like, Eddie Vedder is nominated number-one songwriter in some magazine, and I'm not even listed."

Christopher Gallo

From its debut broadcast back in January of 1990, MTV *Unplugged* has always been a songwriters' forum. The show gives tunesmiths an opportunity to strip away the high decibels and big production values and let their compositions stand on their own melodic and lyrical integrity. In 1993 Nirvana had begun working some acoustic numbers into their live set, "just to wind things down," Nirvana bassist Chris Novoselic told *MTV News*. "But people still manage to writhe around and throw shoes and land headfirst over the barrier and crack their heads open."

*Unplugged* gave Nirvana a chance to test its acoustic mettle under slightly more favorable conditions. "I was surprised but delighted when they said yes to doing the show," says Alex Coletti. Coletti had worked with Nirvana once before. On January 10, 1992, when Nirvana were in New York City to do *Saturday Night Live*, he had videotaped a live set with the band. "Various clips from that have been aired on MTV," Coletti notes, "but never the whole thing. There were 10 or 11 songs, and there's stuff like 'Molly's Lips,' 'Stain,' and other great stuff that's never been seen."

The January '92 taping was an impromptu session, knocked together at the last minute, but it gave Coletti some useful insights into the band. "That one experience of working with Kurt showed me how sensitive he was as a person. Some bands will just walk in and it's like, 'Whatever. Point and shoot. Let's do it and get out

of here.' But Kurt seemed to like to take things and internalize them. I'd heard that he was something of a visual artist. So, beyond making sure he was happy with the stage set, since he seemed to show some interest in it, I thought it would be good if he had some creative input into it."

back. To just go in and play a bunch of songs and make changes to the arrangements to some extent. They tried to stick to acoustic instruments as much as possible. Kurt wanted to make it something that would show a whole different side of the band."

After exchanging these preliminary ideas through MacLeod and Mason, Coletti felt the time was ripe for a face-to-face

room: the band and some friends. So I just got thrown in this room and sat down next to Kurt. No one even bothered to introduce us or anything; it was sort of an awkward situation. So I said, 'Is this a bad time? Do you want to do this now or what?' But he immediately became very friendly, like, 'Oh, oh, the MTV thing. No, let's do it now.' I was prepared to give him the whole *Unplugged* spiel, which is to talk about set lists, sound equipment and things. But it just seemed like it wasn't the right time. So I simply said, 'Hey look, I've got some set drawings.'"

Like many people who worked with Cobain in a professional capacity, Coletti describes the late guitarist as a courteous collaborator, respectful of other people's expertise and quietly hopeful of being respected in turn. "He gave us flexibility. He was pretty cooperative," says Coletti. "He did specify that he wanted star lilies, which are these big, white flowers."

It was at this meeting that the ominous "funeral" remark went down. But before anyone could dwell on it, Chris Novoselic burst into the room brandishing the Ovation bass Coletti had left for him. "He was like, 'Look what I got!' Like a big kid," Coletti narrates. "Kurt just looks up and says, 'That's the ugliest

## "Cobain wanted to make Nirvana's Unplugged appearance something different, somewhat downbeat, really laid back."

Early in the planning stages of their *Unplugged* appearance, Nirvana tour managers Alex MacLeod and Jeff Mason acted as intermediaries between Cobain and Coletti, passing the guitarist's ideas and wishes on to the producer. "Kurt wanted something that would break away from just the normal, dull TV set," says MacLeod. "He didn't want it to look like just a bare stage. He had seen a lot of *Unplugged* shows before, and felt they weren't really unplugged. His feeling was that a lot of the bands would just use semi-acoustic instruments and play their songs exactly the same way they would if they were doing a full show. He wanted to make Nirvana's *Unplugged* appearance slightly different, sort of a downbeat kind of set. Really laid

meeting with Cobain. In November of '93, a few weeks before the taping, Coletti flew up to a Nirvana gig in a remote part of New England, somewhere north of Boston. He was armed with rough sketches of the stage set which embodied Cobain's ideas, and with his own personal Ovation semi-acoustic bass guitar. The latter was meant to be loaned to Chris Novoselic in the event that the Nirvana bassist didn't have an "*Unplugged* bass" of his own.

"It was not a glamorous backstage by any means," Coletti recalls. "The show was in a high school hockey arena. After the show, the band went back to this room and had a catered meal. It was nothing fancy, just franks and beans and a bottle of wine. There were a good dozen people in the

fucking thing I've ever seen in my life.' Chris is like, 'Oh, man, I wanna use it on the show.' Kurt said, 'Well maybe if we fuck it up and bash it up and put some stickers on it....' And I went, 'Umm, you can't do that, Kurt. That's mine!' He got really apologetic, like, 'I'm sorry. I didn't really mean the ugly crack.'"

The set list was another point of discussion, if not contention, between Nirvana and MTV. There were two potential sore points between the parties. First, the band wanted to fill nearly half of their set with obscure covers. "Right away," recalls Alex MacLeod, "we started sorting out how many covers there would be time for, how many songs MTV wanted them to do in total. Just general things like that."

Christopher Gallo

Also disturbing for MTV was the fact that—with the exception of "Come As You Are"—the band wasn't planning to perform any big, instantly recognizable Nirvana hits. "We knew we didn't want to do an acoustic version of 'Teen Spirit,'" drummer Dave Grohl later commented. "That would've been horrendously stupid. We felt it would be better if we found other songs."

According to MacLeod, there was also a practical side to the band's decision not to perform many hits: "They were like, 'We'd love to do that, but a lot of those songs would be really dull if we were to do them that way. They didn't really work acoustically.' The band just thought that there were other songs better-suited to the acoustic format."

The decision to do so many covers reflects a selfless (some would say insecure) desire on Cobain's part to share the spotlight with other songwriters. He was a tireless proselytizer for bands he really loved, like the Vaselines, Scottish buzz-pop supremos led by Eugene Kelly, who now fronts the band Eugenius. Nirvana had covered Vaselines tunes in the past, including "Molly's Lips" and "Son Of A Gun." (These early recordings were later collected on the *Incesticide* CD.)

The Meat Puppets were another of Kurt's obsessions. "He told me the second Meat Puppets album [Meat Puppets II *(SST)*]was great," Cobain's widow, Courtney Love, recalled in a December '94 interview with *Rolling Stone*. "I couldn't stand [*the album*]. Then he played [*those songs*] to me—his voice, his cadence and his timing. And I realized he was right."

Thanks to *Unplugged,* Cobain's fans got a chance to replicate Love's experience. Kurt's performance of the Puppets' "Plateau," "Oh Me" and "Lake Of Fire" have a ragged vulnerability that's far more personal and affecting than any calculated run-through of "Teen Spirit" could have been. In retrospect, there was solid wisdom in Coletti's decision to weather his MTV superiors' pressure to see Nirvana play their hits and honor Cobain's intentions instead.

"Kurt said he really enjoyed those Meat Puppets songs because he really had to push his voice," Coletti observes. "Like he didn't feel good singing them. He picked them purposely because they were challenging vocally for him."

Many of the decisions about songs and arrangements went down at two day-long rehearsals held prior to the day of taping. "They were at the SST rehearsal facility in New Jersey," Alex MacLeod recalls. "We brought our own monitor system in. Also, because we were on tour at the time, they were working on stuff during soundcheck. Kurt worked on his own, too."

*continued on page 68*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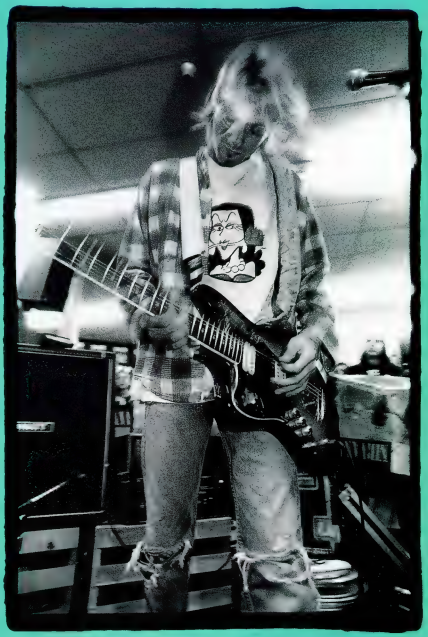
# about the gear– a nirvana axology

**Earnie Bailey, Nirvana's guitar tech, gives a first hand account of the band's ever-escalating instrument arsenal.**

## By Earnie Bailey



ON NIRVANA'S EARLY recordings, Kurt played either a Univox Mosrite copy or a Japanese Epiphone through a BOSS DS-1 [*distortion unit*] into a Randall head powering the cabinet of the week. Chris ran an Ibanez Black Eagle bass through a Fender Twin Reverb for the recording of *Bleach*. Kurt later switched to a Sunn Beta-Lead head driving Peavey 4x12 cabinets as Nirvana made the transition from bars to ballrooms.

For the recording of *Nevermind*, Chris used a Gibson Ripper bass through an Ampeg SVT 400. Kurt now had a late-Sixties Mustang, a Jaguar with DiMarzio pickups and several new Stratocasters with humbuckers in the bridge position. An Electro-Harmonix Small Clone chorus was used with the DS-1 for this album, along with a Mesa/ Boogie Studio Two preamp.

This became the live rig for the *Nevermind* tour, along with various exploding power amps and Marshall cabinets that seemed to multiply on a nightly basis. Later came the switch to a BOSS DS-2 distortion pedal and Crest 4801 power amps (the amps that wouldn't die).

For *In Utero*, Kurt primarily used his Jaguar and a Twin Reverb. Effects consisted of a DS-2 distortion, a Small Clone and an Electro-Harmonix Poly Chorus (or Echoflanger: same electronics, different packaging!). Chris used his Ripper through a 200-watt Hiwatt head (converted to accept KT90 tubes) through a Marshall cabinet. Before the *In Utero* tour, Fender sent out four new Mustangs, even more Stratocasters and a Jagstang prototype Kurt had been working on. The Mustangs all had to be routed for humbuckers and fitted with Tune-O-Matic bridges, as did the Jagstang. Kurt returned to a white Univox as well as a sunburst Univox custom and added a SansAmp distortion pedal to his lineup of gizmos. His signal chain went as follows: Guitar-Boss DS-2-SansAmp-Poly Chorus or Echo Flanger (whichever worked that day)-Small Clone-Amp.

On the last tour, Kurt had eight cabinets, Chris had another eight and Pat Smear carried yet four more. They were all running wide open; and it was, to say the least, unbelievable. Running the guitars and bass through the P.A. became almost unnecessary.

Kurt's Martin D-18E, which he used on the *Unplugged* show, became his main acoustic at the start of Nirvana's 1993 tour. Before that, Kurt played an early-Sixties Gibson-made Epiphone Texan. This guitar had its adjustable bridge replaced with a lefty flat-top bridge, which greatly improved the sound. For "Polly," "Something In The Way" and "Dumb," Kurt used a mid-Sixties Stella 12-string that was strung with a six-set of nylon folk strings. ●

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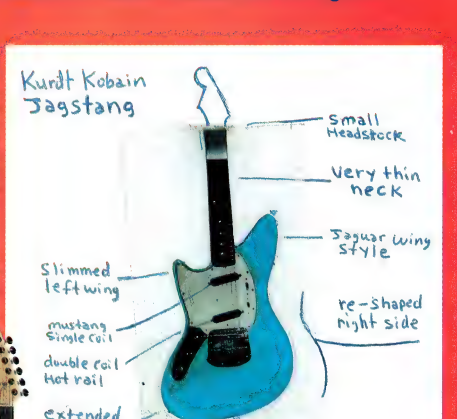
Lisa Mason is Barbarella's keyboardist. Photography by Mike Tobias, styling & makeup by Nikki Antonio and design by Quentin Fulsphix

# seek and destroy

**He played them. He smashed them. He had them build some more. Guitar World looks at Kurt Cobain's collection of custom Fenders and Ferringtons.**

## By Alan di Perna

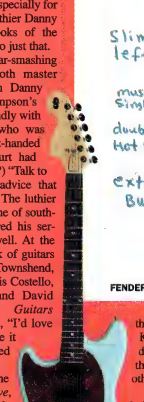



**FENDER BLENDER: Kurt Cobain's original design notes for his hybrid Fender Jagstang.**

LIFE IS NEVER easy for a left-handed guitarist, even a successful one. They just don't make nearly as many lefty guitars as they do righties. Selection is always limited. But life is especially tough for a destructive left-handed guitarist—like Kurt Cobain. The rock ritual of smashing your guitar on stage had a special poignancy in Cobain's case. He really had to *hunt* for the things. After the phenomenal success of *Nevermind*, however, there were suddenly people who wanted to make custom guitars specially for Kurt Cobain. Two of them—luthier Danny Ferrington and Larry L. Brooks of the Fender Custom Shop—got to do just that.

Interestingly, it was the guitar-smashing thing that led Cobain to both master builders. He hooked up with Danny Ferrington via Richard Thompson's guitar technician, who was friendly with Nirvana roadie Nick Close, who was desperately searching for left-handed necks to replace the ones Kurt had destroyed onstage. (Got all that?) "Talk to Danny Ferrington," was the advice that Close received. Which he did. The luthier helped Close track down a cache of south-paw necks and then volunteered his services as a guitar builder as well. At the time, he was compiling a book of guitars he'd built for players like Pete Townshend, Ry Cooder, David Lindley, Elvis Costello, Henry Kaiser, Albert Lee and David Hidalgo called *Ferrington Guitars* (HarperCollins). He told Close, "I'd love to make Kurt a guitar and have it be in this book." Cobain liked the idea.

"So Kurt called me from the backstage of *Saturday Night Live*, when Nirvana was doing the show," Ferrington narrates. "We talked for a long time about what he wanted. Basically, he loved Fender Mustangs, but he also hated them because you couldn't tune them. And it's hard to raise the action. He thought you could improve on it. He essentially wanted a more sophisticated Fender Mustang. So we talked about the features he wanted. Then the band went to Australia. Kurt faxed me over a little drawing that he'd done, with the pickup placements and other little notes."



**Kurt Cobain's custom Ferrington**

The instrument Ferrington built is depicted in his book. In body shape and headstock, it's closely modeled on a Fender Mustang, but it has a Gibson-style Tune-O-Matic bridge and three Bartolini pickups. The bridge pickup is a humbucker, while the neck and middle pickups are single coils. The middle pickup is angled. The bridge pickup, Ferrington further explains, "has a coil tap, so you can get series, parallel and single coil. Kurt said he wanted a lot of switch options."

The bridge pickup variations are governed by a small toggle switch located below the guitar's two knobs (a tone and a volume). There's also a Strat-style pickup selector. The instrument's body is made of basswood, with a maple neck and rosewood fretboard. The baby blue body color and tortoise shell pickguard were Cobain's choices, as were the heart-shaped fret inlays.

"Kurt wanted the guitar set up really heavy," Ferrington further recalls, "like a 0.058 low E string. Because the Mustang is a short-scale guitar you can use really heavy strings, like a jazz player might use. That combination of short scale and heavy

*continued on page 186*

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Since the Meat Puppets were on tour with Nirvana at the time, and Cobain was planning to sing three of their tunes, it seemed a natural move to invite the two principal Puppets, siblings Curt and Cris Kirkwood, to come lend a hand on acoustic guitars. "Why not?" Novoselic later quipped. "We weren't learning their songs right anyway."

Back at MTV HQ, the decision to include the Meat Puppets in the broadcast was hardly greeted with jubilation. Alex Coletti recalls: "I said to MTV, 'They're going to bring some guests on.' And at first everybody's eyes lit up, like, 'Who's it gonna be?' They wanted to hear the 'right' names—Eddie Vedder or Tori Amos or God knows who. But when I said, 'the Meat Puppets,' it was kind of like, 'Oh, great. They're not doing any hits, *and* they're inviting guests who don't have any hits to come play. Perfect.'"

Nirvana seemed intent on bringing sonic variety to their set. Along with the Kirkwood brothers, they also included cellist Lori Goldston and former Germs guitarist Pat Smear, both of whom had been playing with Nirvana on tour. Covering the Vaselines' "Jesus Doesn't Want Me For A Sunbeam" gave Chris Novoselic a chance to put down his bass and strap on an accordion. The accordion, he told *MTV News*, "was the first instrument I learned when I was young. And Kurt bought one, this really neat red one. And I go, 'Hey, check this out.' And I put it on and started playing it. And then we were starting to screw around with rehearsals for *Unplugged* and we did 'Jesus Doesn't Want Me For A Sunbeam.' There's this violin or organ [*on the original recording*] and I go, 'I know. I'll play the accordion on in this song!' I picked it up and started playing, and it sounded really cool."

Despite the band's preparations, Alex MacLeod describes their overall mood as "nervous" as the day of the show approached: "It was the first time in a long while I'd seen them all so nervous about doing something. Things had gotten to the point where they'd go out playing in front of 7,500 or 10,000 people and it was just like [*very nonchalantly*], 'Okay, boom, let's do it.' But they were really nervous about doing *Unplugged*. Because they were really leaving themselves wide open."

As Alex Coletti remembers it, Dave Grohl and Chris Novoselic were the first to turn up at Sony Music Studios, at 54th Street and 10th Avenue in Manhattan, on November 18th, 1993. It was around 3:00 in the afternoon, the appointed time for *Unplugged*'s pre-show camera rehearsal/soundcheck. Concerned with Grohl's propensity to hit the drums really hard, Coletti presented him with some brushes and sizzle sticks, a type of stick used in classical percussion which consists of several slender dowels loosely wrapped and which creates a softer impact than a solid drumstick. Since it was around the holiday season, Coletti had the sticks wrapped up in Christmas paper.

"I figured I'd be remembered forever as the dick MTV producer," Coletti laughs. "I was afraid Dave would just roll his eyes, like, 'Oh great, the asshole from MTV is trying to be my friend.' But instead he opened the package and said, 'Cool, I've never had brushes before. I've never even tried using them.' As it turned out, he used both the sticks and the brushes, which helped [*audio producer*] Scott Litt out immensely, I believe. It's nice that the band was so amenable to trying new things."

In the end, Novoselic didn't use Coletti's Ovation bass, but rather a Guild acoustic/electric bass rented from S.I.R. in New York—an instrument that has been used on other episodes of *Unplugged*. Pat Smear played an inexpensive, red-white-and-blue Buck Owens model guitar that belongs to Novoselic and had been extensively reworked by Nirvana guitar technician Earnie Bailey "to get it to sound like a guitar and not a kid's toy," as Alex MacLeod puts it.

Up in the soundbooth sat noted record producer Scott Litt (R.E.M., John Mellencamp), who had remixed two tracks from *In Utero* and worked with Nirvana on MTV's *Live And Loud* New Years' Eve show. (Litt, who was there as the show's audio produc-

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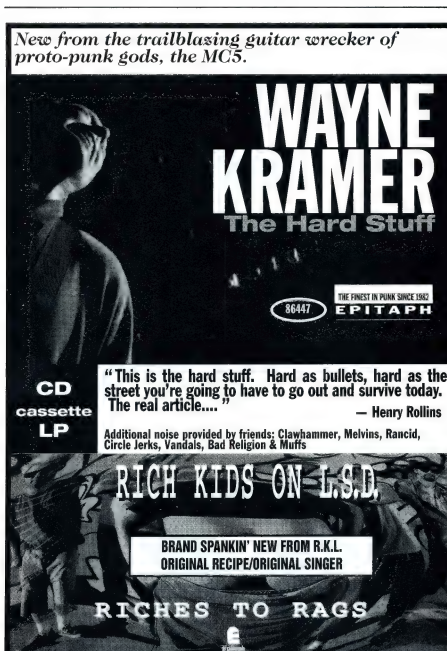
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# Solo Asylum

## Slash finds shelter from the storms of Guns N' Roses in the warmth and comfort of his new band, Snakepit.

By Gary Graff

SHIT HAPPENS. EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T PLAN IT. THAT COULD EASILY BE A MOTTO FOR SLASH—PERHAPS IN HIS LIFE, BUT CERTAINLY IN HIS MUSICAL CAREER. AND LOTS IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

GUNS N' ROSES REMAIN IN THEIR OWN PARTICULAR BRAND OF LIMBO: STILL TOGETHER, STILL PLANNING ON RECORDING ANOTHER ALBUM, BUT WITH NO CONCRETE PLANS IN SIGHT. THESE DAYS THE GROUP IS WAITING FOR SLASH, WHO EVERYBODY REALIZES IS THE KEITH RICHARDS-LIKE SPIRIT OF GN'R. BUT HE'S OFF DOING SOMETHING THAT, WELL, JUST HAPPENED: SLASH'S SNAKEPIT, AN OUTFIT FORMED WHILE HE AND DRUMMER MATT SORUM WERE HANGING OUT IN THE STUDIO OF THE

Photography By Neil Zlozower

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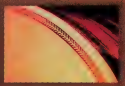

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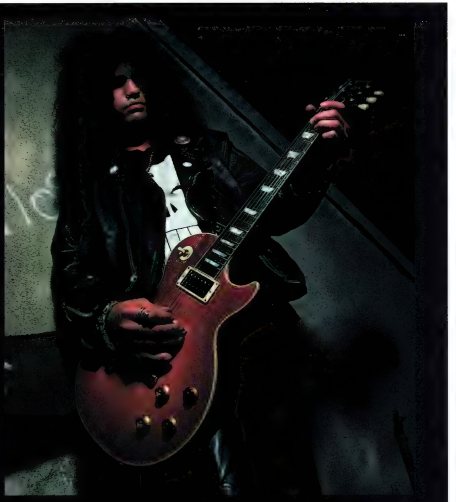
guitarist's Hollywood Hills home, coming up with songs to present to Guns N' Roses. The studio is gone—the house was wrecked in Los Angeles' last big earthquake—but their work remains in the 14 songs on the Snakepit's album, *It's Five O'Clock Somewhere*. Slash's Snakepit is, in fact, no sloppy side project but a formidable band. Slash and Sorum are joined by former Guns guitarist Gilby Clarke and Alice In Chains bassist Mike Inez. Guns keyboardist Dizzy Reed and percussionist Paulinho da Costa are also on board. The vocals are handled by Eric Dover, last seen playing guitar for Jellyfish.

*Five O'Clock* boasts a sturdy and raucous rock sound. Closer in spirit to *Appetite For Destruction* than to *Use Your Illusion*, it's loaded with killer riffs, sturdy grooves and slithery dynamics, though the bluesy touch of the opening track, "Neither Can I," serves notice that the Snakepit comes from its own unique place.



"If Axl's mind is made up, I have to work with it or put my foot down Either way, somebody will be unhappy."

Neil Zlozower

As side projects go, it's a keeper, and Slash plans to give it a good ride, tour included. Hanging out at Geffen Records' Los Angeles offices before jetting to Chicago to visit his wife Renee's family, the former Saul Hudson was loose and friendly, happy with his album and more than willing to divulge what makes the Snakepit hiss and what the general status of Guns N' Roses is these days.

**GUITAR WORLD:** You've always maintained that you didn't need to make a solo album.

**SLASH:** I know. I have a fucking huge boot in my mouth for that one. Every single interview I've done since all this came up has been, "Well, you said..." This is not really a solo record; it's a side project with a bunch of friends—a real band, which is called Snakepit. The only reason my name is tacked onto it is in order to help the record sell.

**GW:** Are the songs on *It's Five O'Clock Somewhere* the same ones that you were writing with Matt Sorum for Guns N' Roses at the time *The Spaghetti Incident* came out?

**SLASH:** This is more or less all of them, plus a couple of new ones. We had 17 songs on tape, but they didn't turn out to be Guns N' Roses songs. Maybe they were a little bit too hard or direct or mainstream rock and roll—simple stuff. Whatever the case, I thought they were cool.

Matt and I got reacquainted with Gilby again, after the whole Guns N' Roses thing with him. Then we hooked up with Mike; I sort of knew him but not all that well. The next thing we knew, we had a band, so we went in the studio to record some music.

**GW:** But you still needed a singer.

**SLASH:** Yeah. At the same time all this was happening, we auditioned about 40 singers, and we ended up with Eric. He was recommended by Gilby's drummer, Mark [*Danzeisen*]. Eric showed up and turned out to be pretty cool; he had a real bratty, punk voice. The song we auditioned him on was "Beggars & Hangers-On," and the version on the album is pretty much the original arrangement. It's going to be the first single, too.

After the record was finished, we realized, "Well, fuck, we might as well tour." We had worked really hard on it in a way that Guns doesn't work anymore. Guns has the leisure of doing things at its own pace. This thing had a more realistic kind of pace, which was that of a new band—not that I'm planning on doing this instead of Guns or anything. But I figured we might as well do what we can for it. It was very spontaneous, very fast. For these songs, we sat up and wrote lyrics and a melody on the same night we recorded the vocal. The way all of us came together, it was a great off-the-cuff chemistry. We were just sort of winging it, doing everything from a low-budget point of view. There are no rock stars in the Snakepit. [*laughs*]

**GW:** It's interesting to hear you describe Eric's style as you do, because Jellyfish was such a polished, high-craft group.

**SLASH:** The funny thing is that the first demo he sent me, before we did "Beggars," was very mellow, a Lenny Kravitz mixed with Steven Tyler sort of thing—a completely different vibe from what we're

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doing, but with a really good vocal performance. I said, "Here's this song, try this out." This was some fucking major outlet for him. You can hear it in his vocals—this kid went off. It was interesting to watch him react to it, the way he developed and just went wild and got really out there.

We had a great time doing it, just because I had a little bit of time to look closely at the whole Guns ordeal, and realized Guns has reached a certain point you can't turn back from. You can't really simplify things or go back to basics once you've reached a certain point. This is the avenue back to where I came from, the hustle and bustle of coming up from ground zero. It was fun getting it together; I actually enjoyed the work.

**GW:** So why don't you think Guns N' Roses can do anything this simply?

**SLASH:** I think the individual personalities in Guns N' Roses went in unforeseen directions as the band got bigger. I stayed one way, Duff's his way and Axl's his way. Our personalities are all amplified out of proportion now. But we're still a band, still very close and all that—Axl still wants to do this, I still want to do the same old thing, and Duff still wants to do something.

It's the whole celebrity status that selling a certain amount of records creates around you. It's a funny thing: when we're at a gig, that kind of treatment is a given. I think everybody understands why we're being hustled as a group into a hotel and the sort of psychotic environment that goes with touring. That goes with the territory. But since I've been doing this thing on my own, I'm on the street, meeting people in a restaurant or in a record store or wherever. They come up and say hi and I can actually be toe to toe with people, because of the realization that I'm just a fuckin' guitar player. With Guns it's another thing, a whole other mindset. Now I'm sorta like on my own at the moment, wandering around, taking care of business. It's nice to be appreciated by people on the street. They don't hassle me. It's a nice feeling. There's a public perception of Guns that we're a little bit jaded and paranoid, which is valid because we have gone through some stuff. But I don't carry the star personality because I'm just a musician. Whereas for Axl, being the lead singer, that's the inevitable, obvious thing.

**GW:** Will it be harder for you to return to Guns N' Roses if you really enjoy this experience?

**SLASH:** Oh, we're still rehearsing—I have to be at rehearsal tonight, in fact. I've worked out some agreement between my schedule with Snakepit and working with Guns. Whatever time off I have, I'll be there to do whatever Guns will do. When Snakepit goes on the road it'll be doing the be-all end-all thing I wish Guns could do, to just go play clubs, small places, where I can see the whites of the kids' eyes that we'll be playing for. I just want to get that off my chest. After two-and-a-half years in stadiums with Guns N' Roses—not that I can knock it—we started wondering, "Where can we go from here?" I wanted to get back to doing a club tour for *The Spaghetti Incident* but Axl and I didn't see eye to eye on that. This will be my outlet to get grounded.

There are no delusions of grandeur about this tour. I want to go out and get to the clubs, go to the bar after the show's over and have a beer. I feel a little more relaxed and at ease in that kind of environment.

**GW:** So it sounds like it *will* be harder to go back to Guns if you really enjoy yourself on the Snakepit tour.

**SLASH:** I'm just having a lot of fun, man. Everyone in the Snakepit thing has his own agenda—Matt and I are in one band, Gilby's got a band, Mike has his band. And I think Eric is using this as a stepping stone to becoming a lead singer as opposed to a guitar player. We have to work around everyone's schedule. It's fun while we're doing it, but I'm still committed to Guns, too. I have a real day to day attitude now. We'll see what happens.

**GW:** What exactly is the current status of Guns N' Roses?

**SLASH:** I would love for Guns to come back with a killer record but I've been confused for a while as to what direction we're going in. I really haven't changed, but things around me have. For me it's still, "Is the guitar in tune? Are my cables hooked up? Are the amps on? Okay, let's go!" Axl, on the other hand, has a more theatrical image in mind for the band. Me and Duff have pretty much stayed the same, but Axl is moving deeper into all the visuals and theatrics and so on that I don't think most of the other guys give a shit about. But that's how Axl feels. I'm trying to work with it, but it depends on the end result and what it makes the band look like. For instance, I wasn't real comfortable with that cabaret deal we did on tour for awhile, with the horn players and the singers.

**GW:** You did look happier on the last leg of the tour, when it was just the six of you.

**SLASH:** Yeah, I was happy then. I wish we had done that for the whole tour; I never got out of the kind of mindset where we played four nights at the Marquee as a five-piece.

**GW:** There is a real air of mystery surrounding Gilby Clarke's departure from the band.

**SLASH:** It sort of remains a mystery to me, too. [*laughs*] I just got the vibe from Axl that he was no longer interested in Gilby's contributions as a songwriter—not that Gilby ever had a chance as a songwriter. So I went to Gilby and said, "Before you hear it from anyone else, there's a problem here." It's still never been completely resolved. Right now we're jamming with Zakk

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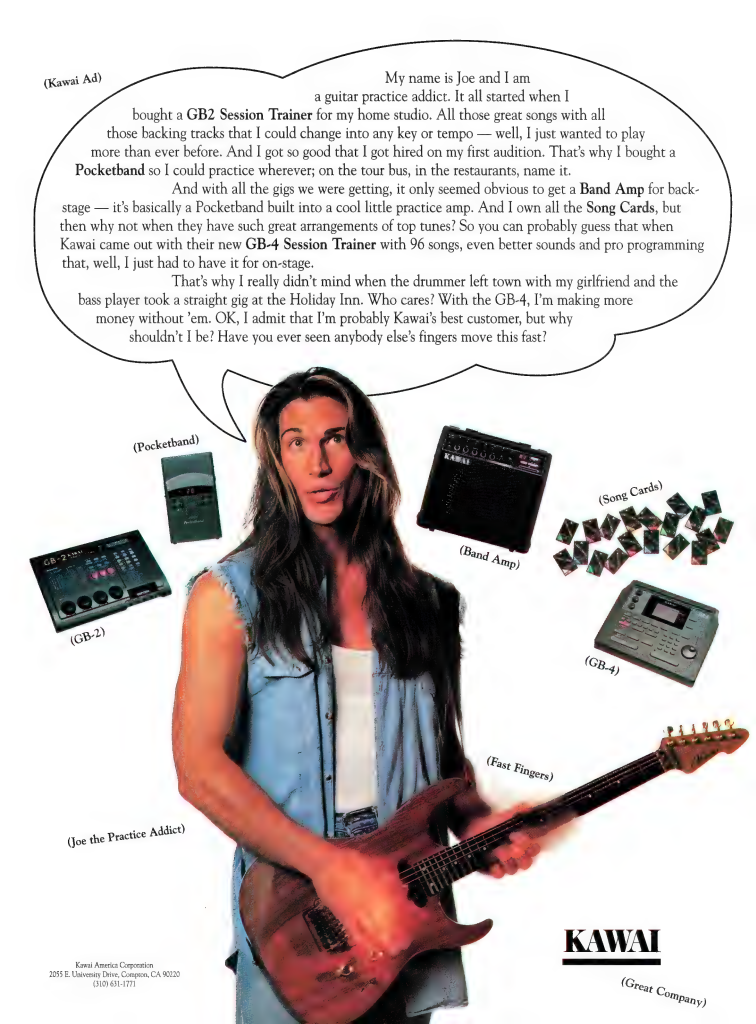


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Wylde. And while he and I are great friends, we're tending to sound a little like Guns N' Ozzy—a bit heavier than even I like to get. Zakk and myself are both blues-based, so similar in style that we sound like a fucking freight train together. We're just feeling the whole thing out. Having Zakk come down is something Axl wanted to do. Zakk and I have jammed a lot, but not in a situation like Guns, where we would have to write together. So I have no idea what the future holds for Guns.

**GW:** You were obviously comfortable playing with Gilby.

**SLASH:** Yeah. He's sort of like a glorified version of Izzy. Izzy was a great personality; he just lost interest, and I understand why. So Gilby came in and took Izzy's parts and played them the way he plays, which still fit into the band. He played the role great, but he was still himself doing it. It's not like we had to hire someone and say, "Here, put this on." It was a very natural transition that happened. I'm glad to be working with him in Snakepit. I miss him in Guns.

**GW:** What lineup recorded "Sympathy For The Devil" for the *Interview With The Vampire* soundtrack?

**SLASH:** Well, the story behind that song isn't particularly pleasant. I had no interest in being involved in a Tom Cruise movie. He's a part of our generation that I don't have anything to do with. The film is about a subject that I'm very romantic about—horror and vampires, and the book is great. But I thought the movie was entirely laughable, like a gothic brat pack thing. I like Brad Pitt, but I like him better as a hick.

We got this phone call from Geffen, asking us for a favor. Axl wasn't interested, and I wasn't interested, but I thought it would be great to get the band into one room and get the wheels moving for what would be pre-production for the next Guns album. I went to see the movie and didn't really like it. They had the Stones version in it already, so I thought, "Fine, leave the Stones version in." That was the coolest thing in the whole movie!

The next thing I knew, Axl went to see it and loved it and wanted to do the song. I figured, "Well, cool. Whatever." I hate having to do a cover, especially of a song that didn't need to be copied.

When we got in the studio, it turned out that only Duff, Matt and I showed up. We had to put the whole thing together with no vocals, and it's a very vocal-oriented that has the same chord changes over and over again. Then Axl came in and did his vocals and brought along a guitar player who he used to hang with in Indiana. That helped ruin what I thought was going to be a cool version of the song. In other words, it didn't provide any vehicle for getting the band back together.

**GW:** Can't you, or you and Duff, exert a little muscle and make Axl go along with you?

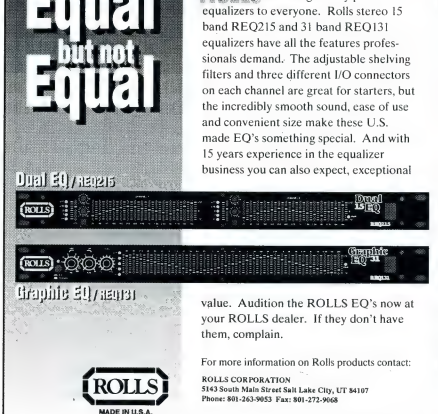
**SLASH:** This doesn't have a lot to do with Duff; it's really between Axl and me. If Axl's mind is made up, I have to work with it or put my foot down. Either way, somebody will be unhappy. I just try and work to arrive at some sort of compromise that everyone can live with.

**GW:** Is that your nature?

**SLASH:** I'm pretty easygoing by nature, very laid back. I only get uptight when things are really looking a little pekid, really going in a negative direction. Then I'll come out and say my piece. But that's mostly between the band and I. It's nobody's business as far as the public is concerned.

**GW:** You must enjoy having Mike Inez in the Snakepit, because Alice In Chains have also had their share of band problems. Do you guys sling war stories around with Mike?

**SLASH:** Of course. There's a lot of related scenarios, so we hang out over beers and laugh about it. We know that in the general scheme of things, it's just a fuckin' band. It's not that important. What *is* important is that it makes a few people happy when we produce music that helps them get through the day. It doesn't have any more significance than that. I mean, the best Zeppelin records might have had a personal influence on me. I love the fact that they're there, but that doesn't change the situation with the rain or taxes or what-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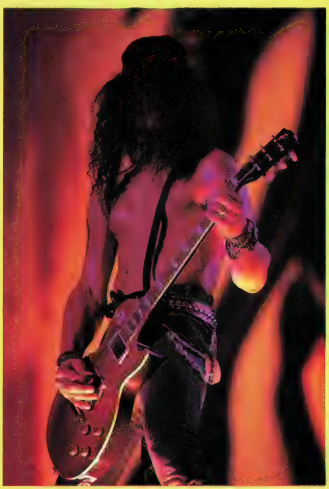
# Bull's Eye

GN'R hot-shot Slash comments on some of his past and present glories.

BY GARY GRAFF



**"SWEET CHILD O' MINE"**

*Appetite For Destruction*

"When the band was first signed, it was such a weird period. We were still basically urchins, living in a house rented for us by some prospective managers. We were sitting around in this house with no furniture, watching the one thing we did have—a TV. I made that opening riff up as a joke, while we were sitting there, and it ended up being a song. I'll never forget how much I dreaded when that song would come up at rehearsal or in a set. To this day, I feel a little bit like that. I get more into it now because it's been long enough since it was written. But I really hated it all the way through the end of the [*1988-'89*] Aerosmith tour, when the band got really big. I thought it was really silly; I thought Axl's vocal part was great, but it was written as a stupid little thing on my part—a joke—and it turned into our biggest hit."

**"PARADISE CITY"**

*Appetite For Destruction*

"That was written in the days when we finally scraped up enough money from our Troubadour and Roxy gigs to drive up and play San Francisco. We were driving home from The Stone in Frisco and started singing in the van: 'Take me down to paradise city/Where the girls are fat and got big titties.' [*laughs*] It was written right in the back of the van. It was a pretty cool time for us, though we didn't really realize it then."

**"MY MICHELLE"**

*Appetite For Destruction*

"That was written when we were living in this little shithole, one-room studio off of Sunset. We were pretty much a desperate bunch of scumbags at that point. Axl had the 'Well, well, well, my Michelle' part and it was pretty melodic. Then I said, 'Fuck this,' and came up with that heavy 'da da da' riff. That was really an example of us working together, with Axl coming up with the lyrics and basic melody and me writing the riff."

**"COMA"**

*Use Your Illusion I*

"For me, that's the weirdest song, because I was so fucking wasted when I wrote the music, which Axl had to adjust his lyrics to. He came up with this real painful depiction of his world. Both the *Illusions* albums are very heavy, emotionally; people don't realize or understand what a heavy time that was for the band. We were forced to realize how big we were: we couldn't hang out in the same bars or cruise the same neighborhoods we used to. It was a whole different world for us, and we had a hard time adjusting.

"A lot of drugs went on, Izzy was working his inevitable way out, the whole thing with Steven [*Adler, drummer*] was happening. Because of all this, we wrote a lot of heavy, weird material having to do with how fucked up success had made the band. They were hard albums to make, but they got done.

"There are a lot of songs on those albums, like 'November Rain' and 'Back Off Bitch,' that were around from the band's earliest days that I still like better when they were raw. There were so many instruments and synthesizers and stuff added on the album versions that the songs lost some of their spirit."

**"ESTRANGED"**

*Use Your Illusion I*

"Axl's songs usually start out as piano ideas that come up over and over again in rehearsal. We might hear them a year before we record them, or even make them into songs. 'Estranged' was like that. It was just piano, and everything else had to be written to what was existing on piano—all the guitar stuff, all the bass, which Duff did on his own. If you hear the song stripped of all the other instruments, you realize how much work it was to write accompaniment for that."

**"SHOTGUN BLUES"**

*Use Your Illusion II*

"That was the only time I've ever done a guitar solo with Axl in the room. It was a one-take thing. It wasn't a big deal at the time, but looking back it really stands out."

**"LOWER"**

*It's Five O'Clock Somewhere*

"I wrote these lyrics right after my ex-girlfriend Savannah shot herself. Kurt Cobain had shot himself right before that. It wasn't dedicated to them, but it was basically a response to the effect their suicides had on me and the effect my response had on Eric when we were sitting together and writing it."

**"BE THE BALL"**

*It's Five O'Clock Somewhere*

"This song is Hunter S. Thompson meets Data East pinball. It's about two guys dropping everything and taking off and going for broke with no real direction in mind as to where their lives are going to end up. And they're doing it through the eyes of a pinball, whose journey is just as erratic. I wrote this for Data East, the company that made my pinball machine. They said, 'Write a pinball song,' and I thought, 'How the fuck do I write a pinball song?' Then I got the idea to incorporate the concepts of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas*, where two guys just take off in a big car full of drugs, and hit the road."

**"DOIN' FINE"**

*It's Five O'Clock Somewhere*

"That was a spur of the moment kind of thing. We called up some strippers and had them come down to the studio. They got really drunk—that party audio that's in the middle of the song is all very real. You can hear Mike Inez smashing a TV set and the glass blowing out. I wasn't there, of course; they told me about it." ●

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ever is going on on the street. You can take yourself so seriously that you get into an environment where everything is blown out of proportion. The best thing you can do is make a record, go out and have a really good relationship with your audience.

**GW:** Doesn't all the confusion surrounding Guns get extremely tiresome?

**SLASH:** Sure. *[laughs]* Right now we're just plodding along, and rehearsing. Playing with Zakk is obviously different. We're just trying to keep everything together; Guns is a great band, and I'd hate to see anything happen to it. We're just trying to hang in there and maintain the inspiration. We've been through this kind of situation God knows how many times, and each time it's always a little more exacerbated. It's like a junkie: you go through your first jones, and the next time around it's more intense than the last one. But we're strong enough as a band to get through those problems, or obstacles, as I like to call them.

**GW:** Was the atmosphere in Guns N' Roses as casual as that in the Snakepit when the band first got together?

**SLASH:** That's the ironic thing—it was! We had no concept of what the future might hold. We were just having a good time playing together, forging ahead. That's all we did; we just played and took whatever opportunity we could get. Then, before we knew it, Guns went from point A to point C, and here we are. There's no going back now, as far as that band's concerned. The Snakepit thing happened so innocently and so spontaneously. We were sitting around my house, writing songs for no particular reason, and then the next thing you know, we were recording a record. We've never played live together, but we're going on tour. I love that feeling of winging it. That's why I like to do those outside projects. I never listen to the material before I go in.

**GW:** *It's Five O'Clock Somewhere* starts with a blues, "Neither Can I." Is that a deliberate statement about your roots?

**SLASH:** Nah. There isn't a deliberate statement on the whole record. It's just how we happened to be feeling.

**GW:** But were there things that you put on the Snakepit album that you might have to sublimate on a Guns N' Roses project?

**SLASH:** That's an interesting question. The funny thing about Guns N' Roses is that it's really a sum of the parts. Then you break those parts down: Izzy does a solo record; Duff does a solo record; I do the Snakepit thing, which I refuse to call a solo record. You can see the input that makes up Guns N' Roses when you strip it down

*continued on page 116*

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# RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

**He's mad as hell and he's not going to take it anymore. Extreme's Nuno Bettencourt takes on the music industry.**

BY E.D. MENASCHÉ

"LOOK, EXTREME WILL never be considered hip, no matter what people think 'hip' means." Nuno Bettencourt's voice is soft but carries more than a hint of defiance, even bitterness. "But you know what? We're gonna be here. You're not gonna get rid of us. The music industry's just not that powerful."

If that statement seems a bit odd coming from the guitarist and leader of a band that has produced a Number One single ("More Than Words"), and whose last two albums, *Pornograffitti* and *III Sides to Every Story,* went platinum and gold, respectively, you could chalk it up to Bettencourt's relish for assuming the role of

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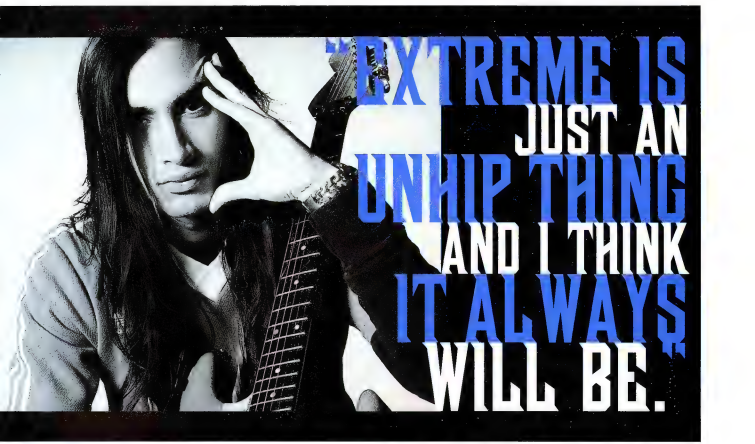
the underdog. Or, you could look at the bigger picture: musical fashion has changed a lot since Bettencourt first emerged as one of the bright lights in shred. Flame-fingered axemen have become something of an endangered species, like the music industry's crazy aunt that lives upstairs and nobody talks about. Justified or not, Bettencourt and company have been lumped into that group, disdainfully referred to as the next big thing, you can cash in," Gary Cherone sings on "Hip Today". "Hip today...you'll be gone tomorrow."

Bettencourt's production echoes those lyrical themes. *Punchline*'s bone-dry sound stands in stark contrast to past, slicker efforts. The performances are intense, almost ragged. Bettencourt's guitar has a roaming, improvisational quality, and even on a six-string showcase like "Midnight Express," he seems to have opted for feel over flash. There's still plenty of melody the performance—it's basically just an excuse for the guitarist to show off. You can listen to Nirvana, you can listen to Pearl Jam or whoever you want...maybe they don't have the greatest guitar players or the greatest technical solos, but their music is about vibe, and the guitar playing serves the right purpose within that framework.

I do think there has been a reaction against technique for its own sake, though. People were thinking, "Yeah, there are so many people who can play, but nobody's




"hair bands." What seems to annoy Bettencourt most is the fact that a label he considers to be inaccurate is so hard to shake.

"We never fit into that whole Eighties thing," he explains. "The things we were writing about were different from other bands who were singing about getting laid and driving fast cars. But people like to put you into neat little packages And if you don't fit into those nice little packages, people have a hard time trying to grip what you're doing. I think Extreme's music is too stylistically diverse for anyone to pigeonhole us like that."

Those words amount to more than just a pretty sentiment deliberately laid out for the purposes of an interview. Extreme's new release, *Waiting For The Punchline* (A&M), comes across like a glove to the face of pop culture. Songs like "Cynical," "No Respect" and "Hip Today" point an angry finger at what Extreme sees as the consequences of trend-related success. "On and rhythmic complexity to this music—qualities consistent with the body of Extreme's work—but the harmonies aren't quite so sweet, the guitar tone is more cutting, the grooves deeper and nastier.

As frustrating as it may be, the music industry is fueled by trends, and whether or not Extreme can navigate the treacherous middle ground between avoiding what Bettencourt calls "hip" labels and staying relevant to an ever-evolving pool of listeners remains an open question.

**GUITAR WORLD:** You have always been celebrated for your technique. A lot of players have recently expressed the feeling that the music business is a little hostile to that kind of playing . Do you agree?

**NUNO BETTENCOURT:** No. You can listen to plenty of bands with guitarists who can play their asses off. But, as far as I'm concerned, good playing has to serve the song. If the song's not there, there's no depth to saying anything." Nobody was bothering to express themselves, whether it be lyrically or instrumentally. Music in the Eighties was too concerned with sounding nice, and we were even a part of that. We were very concerned with the sound of our records being perfect.

**GW:** Is *Waiting For The Punchline* an effort to get away from your past?

**BETTENCOURT:** We're not changing. We didn't change our theory of writing or the way we work as a band because of what's happening now in music, and that's probably why we're always having trouble.

**GW:** It must be very difficult to break free from the categorization that the record industry imposes on artists.

**BETTENCOURT:** Yeah. But you know what? It's always been the goal of any band to break free from categorization. You've got to understand—in the Sixties and Seventies, bands were given time to grow. Take a band like the Beatles; you listen to their

Lorinda Sullivan

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early stuff and you love it. But—in my eyes and I'm sure even in their eyes—when you look at how they developed to suddenly reach the level of *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, your reaction is like, "Holy Shit! That's something! It isn't just a pop song."

Forget about doing that now. You have to *be there* already. You have to be at that *Rubber Soul* status for record people not to dismiss you. You don't get a chance to grow. If you're a new band and your first record doesn't sell, the industry says, "See ya. Good-bye." You don't get four or five albums to find out who you really are. You're stamped into an identity by the first or second record you put out.

For example, they want us to keep doing "More than Words" [Pornograffitti] They want us to be that acoustic band. And their attitude is, "It made you famous, so what's your problem?" And if you want something different for your next single, they think you're fighting success. They have their marketing plan, and they always think you're up to something if you don't fit it exactly. In a way, the presentation of our music is out of our hands. It's up to the record labels and what they put out. We just make a record.

**GW:** You have to get your thing across to the public at your shows.

**BETTENCOURT:** The shows are the only thing we have control over. That's where people can come and see us play and go, "Oh, that's what you guys do."

**GW:** What are your thoughts on the radical shift in musical climate that this country has recently undergone?

**BETTENCOURT:** It's great and it's sad, like anything else. When something great is happening, all this shit comes in behind it. And everybody's got to have one of whatever the latest thing is. You know: "I want a Nirvana...*I* want a Pearl Jam. Where can I get one, how can I *be* one?" Despite that, though, I think the current scene is great because I'm really enjoying a lot of the music that's out, even though everything seems to be in a state of turmoil; nobody knows what's alternative anymore, nobody knows what's pop, or *what* is going on. The categories have become confused, and I think that confusion is the closest thing we've had to reality in a long time.

**GW:** What is "Hip Today" about?

**BETTENCOURT:** I think that a lot of the current alternative stuff is really hip, but it's gonna eat itself, just like the last hip thing did. "Hip Today" is about the people and bands—and they know who they are—who will do anything they have to do to *be* hip, to fit in with what's happening now. You don't know how many people have told us that what we're

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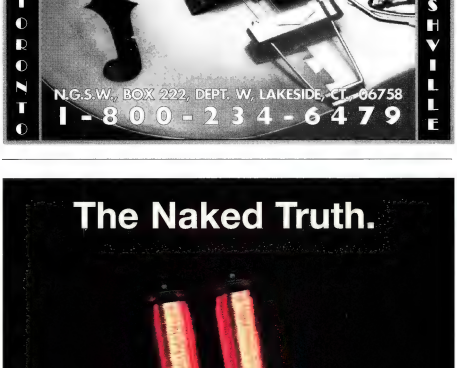
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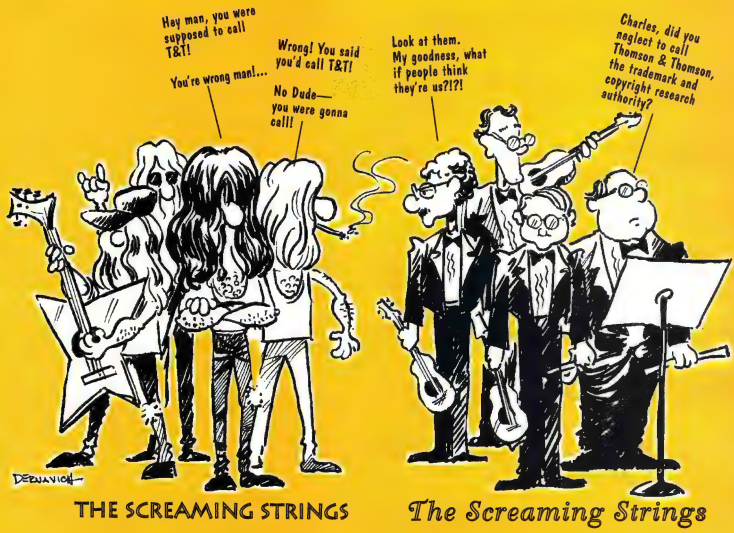
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wearing, or what we're playing, or the kind of mix we're doing just isn't *happening* now. It's fucking sickening after a while. We just want to do what we feel like doing, what comes out of us. But if you do that, you always seem to get the short end of the stick. Extreme is just an unhip thing and I think it always will be. Extreme is like that geek at school who always seems to get picked on.

**GW:** What do you consider hip?

**BETTENCOURT:** Well, let me answer the opposite. What I mean by being "unhip" is never belonging to anybody's little label or fitting into some little box that anyone wants to shove us into. In the Eighties, people in the mainstream were looking at us like we had three heads because of the songs we were singing and the records we were making. But we got thrown into that hair band bin because we had long hair and we weren't quite ugly enough. And now, everybody's so outrageous and "unconformed" that in comparison, Extreme looks conformist. And we're going, "Wait a second, we've never changed." It's a weird position to be in. But Extreme likes being the underdog if anything. We're used to getting the finger pointed at us.

**GW:** I would think that would give you some freedom, too. If you're not flavor of the month, you don't have to worry about staying flavor of the month.

**BETTENCOURT:** It's great—but it hurts you because if you're not flavor of the month, and you don't sell records.... [*shrugs*] You just gotta do what you do. I couldn't give a shit if it sells anymore. We sold two million records in America with *Pornograffitti*, and on our last record we sold like 700,000—a gold record—and yet people looked at that like it was a disappointment. Fuck, if I could have a gold record every time! That's how powerful the industry has gotten; you can't be this "gold record" band because that's in the middle of the road. Either you sell nothing and you're real underground and hip, or you sell a lot and you're huge. But Extreme is always in the middle somewhere.

**GW:** The guitar arrangements on *Punchline* have a lot of subtle movement from beginning to end—they seem part of a continuous whole. How does your role as producer impact your guitar arrangements?

**BETTENCOURT:** I just don't think about it. As opposed to saying, "I did this on the verse and I knew that going in," it never is like that. That's why it's so difficult to answer questions about arranging guitar.

**GW:** You're improvising to

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some degree?

**BETTENCOURT:** It's not that I'm improvising all the time, but ideas usually come when you're just playing, and you hit something you like and keep it.

**GW:** Do you do any preproduction before going into the studio?

**BETTENCOURT:** None. Because I've found that preproduction can make things worse. If you perform a song more than once or twice on a recording, you start to lose that magical energy. That's why we stopped doing it. As a matter of fact, on *Pornograffitti,* we were told to go in and do preproduction, but we just went ahead and recorded the album.

**GW:** A lot of artists lament the fact that their demos sound better than their masters because the demos are more spontaneous.

**BETTENCOURT:** That's why we like to get all our sounds out of the way the first few days of recording, before we even lay one note down for the record, so we're not standing around the studio getting stale.

**GW:** Did you sit down with a preconception of how you were going to make the album? It sounds very live.

**BETTENCOURT:** That was our goal. We realized that when we rehearse we have a certain sound, a certain interaction that we don't have at other times. We do a lot of tours where we're playing so far apart from each other—there's a lot of physical distance on the stage—that we lose the vibe of the band and the direct reaction we get from each other.

**GW:** You're not communicating?

Lonnda Sullivan

**BETTENCOURT:** You *are* communicating, but it's more communication with the audience than with the band. But when we got into the rehearsal room and tightened up again as a band, we were like, "Wow, this is what we sound like! Where have you been?" I loved hearing the actual drum sound in the room,


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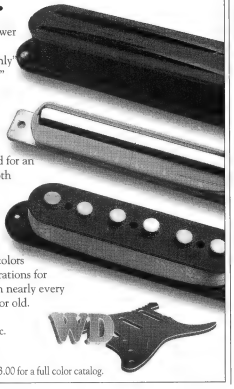

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instead of coming out of some stage monitor. I wanted to capture that sound and feeling. I didn't want to go into the studio and use a lot of technology to color things.

**GW:** Did you actually record the album live?

**BETTENCOURT:** As much as possible—we'd do a couple takes and keep the best one. And if a couple of things needed fixing, we'd punch them in. In other words, the album was as live as it *can* get. We used Criteria studios in Miami because I wanted a big room, someplace we could fit the whole band into and have some separation between the instruments, but still get some nice room sounds. I wanted to do it in New York, but it was too expensive to live there and find a place with a big room. We did three tracks with our new drummer, Michael Mangini, in Boston, but the rest were done in Miami with Paul Geary.

**GW:** Do you ever take songs out and play them live before you record them?

**BETTENCOURT:** All the time. It's part of the writing process. You get input from the audience reaction.

**GW:** What effect did changing drummers have on the making of *Punchline*?

**BETTENCOURT:** The record was pretty much done before Mike came in—apart from those three songs we cut in Boston. The difference between the two? There's really no drama—it's basically like finding someone who's as intense as you are about going out and getting it done. With Paul, we had to push him. I don't think his heart was in it anymore. With Mike it's just like, "Get out of the way!" He has so much enthusiasm. Plus, he can pretty much go in and kill anything in one take.

**GW:** Do you consider motivating the band to be an important part of your role as a producer?

**BETTENCOURT:** Oh, yeah. You have to do whatever it takes to get the album done. But you're dealing with human beings, so you have be aware that everyone's a little different. In one sense, I could care less what the performance comes out like. What I care about is a person's state of mind, because you have to make him feel comfortable. That ultimately gets the best results. So if he wants you to be in the room and give ideas, that's fine. Or sometimes I just leave because I think he'll be more comfortable on his own. You should never have the attitude that the world will end if you don't get this right. Recording an album should feel like you're at home making demos on your four-track.

**GW:** If Nuno the guitarist was working for Mr. Bettencourt the producer, what would Nuno the guitarist need to feel comfortable?

**BETTENCOURT:** A different producer! *[laughs]*

**GW:** What gets the best performance out of you?

**BETTENCOURT:** Being left alone and removing myself from feeling pressure. Sometimes you can do things in less time when you don't have to finish them. I think being pressured to finish in a particular time-frame is the worst enemy. It's important to stay loose and pay attention to the song, enjoy the song.

**GW:** You tend to write a lot about issues and string songs together thematically. Do you write your guitar parts with the lyrical content in mind?

**BETTENCOURT:** It's usually the reverse. Lyrics often come from the mood of the music, and I try to keep my playing consistent with that. But sometimes completed lyrics can point you in a musical direction. I think in the past a lot of people weren't so concerned with what they were singing about, or whether the mood of the music and lyrics fit together. That's always been the biggest thing with us—to play parts that are on target with what the piece is supposed to be saying.

**GW:** Do you feel like your guitar playing allows you to say what you want to say?

**BETTENCOURT:** Sometimes it's so complicated; sometimes it's so simple. You sit down and you can literally break something apart—try and figure out what the guitar player is saying and what he isn'tsaying, or judge what he's doing by the sound—and half the time, if not most of the time, it's like that guitarist never even thought about it. *[laughs]*

**GW:** That gets back to the idea of improvising, where you listen to yourself almost in the third person and respond to your own playing like you're hearing it fresh.

**BETTENCOURT:** Yeah. But I can't get too intense about it because I'll be thinking too much rather than just playing music. There's that fine line between playing music by ear or music by theory; between being interested in a guitar sound because it sounds good and intellectually analyzing why it sounds good. A lot of times, I get really aggravated with thinking too much about that sort of thing. I'm so much more concerned with what I'm playing—what I'm choosing to play musically—than what it sounds like technically.

**GW:** Do you think there's almost too much information out there for guitarists? Is it more difficult for young players to develop their own voices?

**BETTENCOURT:** I've been saying that

*Continued on page 182*

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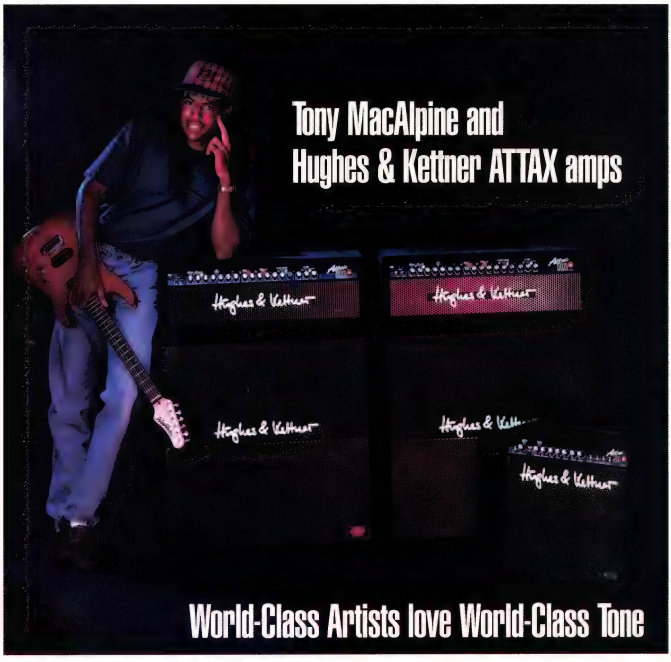


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# REVIEWS

## SET TO CHILL

★ ★ ★ 1/2
**JOHN LEE HOOKER**
Chill Out
VIRGIN

**BY BILL BENTLEY**

IF ROBERT JOHNSON IS the Father of the blues, and Muddy Waters the Son, then surely John Lee Hooker is the Holy Ghost. His presence has always been slightly otherworldly, centered around a sort of soothing savageness. And if, at this stage of his long and illuminating career, the Hook's stomp has turned into more of a stamp, that doesn't mean he's any less alluring. Because no matter what Hooker sings or plays, there is always the essence of one of blues' greatest artists alive inside the song.

John Lee Hooker's attack has always had a twist outside the Chicago urban blues loop, in part because the Clarksdale, Mississippi, native never lived in the Windy City. By the early Forties, Hooker had moved to Detroit, where, away from Chicago's tight-knit Chess Records crowd, he was able to follow his own muse. Hooker stuck with his rhythm-based strengths: an eccentric guitar style, unfettered by strict chord progressions and chorus-verse-chorus constraints, and vocal phrasings just this side of hallucinatory.

*Chill Out*, Hooker's new album, produced by erstwhile running buddy Roy Rogers, is in many ways a summation of every style he's been known for. If there is any flaw in this set, it's that a majority of the songs are from Hooker's past, culled from his enormous back catalog. Throughout his career, however, Hooker has demonstrated his ability to renew himself, to rediscover heat even in the oldest of chestnuts, and *Chill Out* is hot.

The title song kicks off with a ferocious Afro-Cuban groove courtesy of Carlos Santana and band, and it's immediately clear that age ain't nothing but a number for the 78-year-old Hooker. It's the kind of humidity-heavy song that proves an immediate connection between musical cultures (Clarksdale is probably closer to Cuba than it is to Chicago), and as Hooker keeps working his repetitive vocal magic, Carlos

Michael Morenko

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Santana tears the soul in two with bone-chilling lead assaults. One song in, and the listener is on notice that John Lee Hooker has come to kill.

The fever sets in strong on "Deep Blue Sea," a classic JLH solo turn that is part story, part allegory. When Hooker hits the line, "I want to go home, I want to go home/All the planes are drowning," he's entered the universal zone, that rarefied blues space where every small truth becomes big and emotions cut like wire through water. The following track, the Brook Benton classic "Kiddio," is one of those time-tested jaunts designed to take the pressure off. Featuring Charles Brown's sultry piano and swaggering band—guitarist Danny Caron's big-fisted chords envelop Hooker's voice like a glove—"Kiddio" is a bucked-out joy.

Few singers can plumb the emotional depths like Hooker; Van Morrison comes close. Though Morrison's Celtic soul sometimes leans more towards jazz than blues, there is no doubt that he and the bluesman have traveled that same lonesome highway, and lived to sing about it. Teaming up for a duet on two of Hooker's masterpieces, "Serve You Right To Suffer" and "Backbiters And Syndicators," the two singers don't square off as much as merge. Both invoke the Big Ghost, who arrives at full force to fill the song with a powerful dose of transcendence.

The valve theory of pressure relief comes in once more on "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer," a longtime John Lee crowd-pleaser turned bar band staple that, unfortunately, now sounds like the latter. Never mind, because on "Tupelo" John Lee Hooker plays his strongest hand again: himself. Recorded at a filming of an English documentary, John Lee Hooker lets the haunted side out, picking dark and daring runs while he tells a horror story about life in the small Mississippi town that just happened to give the world Elvis Presley. As Hooker moans and moans, his blues becomes almost like a haiku, perfectly formed and executed.

Four new songs, "Woman On My Mind," "Annie Mae," "Too Young" and "Talkin' The Blues," might not stack up to the dozens of chillbumpers Hooker is best known for, but at least they show that this is one bluesman who has more than history on his mind. "Too Young," in particular, is striking in its empathy for youth. As John Lee lovingly recounts the pain of first love, it's amazing just how fresh and tender he sounds singing lines like "She's 16, I'm 17/Say we don't know what we're doing." There's no doubting John Lee is coming straight from the heart, about 60 years down the turnpike. That's deep blues, and just to leave no doubt it's for real, a barbed-wire guitar solo full of deadly dead ends nails the truth down. It's more a prayer than a song, but John Lee Hooker's blues has always been one of faith and hope as much as failure and heartbreak.

Two beautiful songs close out *Chill Out*, "If You've Never Been In Love" and "We'll Meet Again." The former is an open letter on what makes the clock tick, embellished by an emotionally understated acoustic guitar from Roy Rogers, while the latter is pure gospel, with ringing piano trills and the omnipresent Hammond B-3 organ backup. At one point in the album Hooker prefaces a song by saying, "Let's get this one down and then I'm gonna call it a day." In fact, his record company originally claimed that this would be Hooker's last album, but have since changed their tune. No matter. On "We'll Meet Again," he describes a final meeting place where everyone gets together after all. It's an amazing moment, one to be cherished as a closing, not only for *Chill Out* but, more importantly, as a summation of a life in music. It's obvious that the blues is still in Hooker; as long as he's got the breath of life in him, it's got to come out.

# METAL DETECTOR

**by Jeff Gilbert**

**TAD** *Live Alien Broadcast* (Futurist) I was there when this album was recorded live in front of a studio audience. That's me yelling, "Play some Skynyrd, man!" Unless you live next door to them, you've never heard Tad so crude, so barbaric, so...*sober*. ★★★

**NAKED SUN** *wonderdrug* (Omni) Hands down the worst record of the year. Flounders miserably through sax and tabla-backed vocals and melodies so horrible, you'll think Stryper has come back to punish us. What's really scary is that this shit is for real. ★

**NINE POUND HAMMER** *Hayseed Timebomb* (Crypt) I suppose I could have come up with a joke about Nine Pound Hammer and Nine Inch Nails, but I would've had to stop drinking for a minute to do it. This is trailer park metal or, rather, white trash thrash. If you're a headbanging redneck, you'll think this is the best thing since Buckhorn beer. Unfortunately, the joke wears thin after the third song about diddling your sister. ★ ★ 1/2

**BOLT THROWER** *For Victory* (Earache) I have two words for all you Green Day fans: Bolt Thrower. Submit now or remain a part of the Ronald McDonald generation forever. ★ ★ ★ 1/2

**TEXASS** *Texass* (I.F.A.) Charmingly botched leads and a singer who smokes his breakfast characterize this inebriated garage metalfest. Two *other* reasons to buy this disc: Otis P. Otis (ex-Willard) on guitar, and the new Metal Detector theme song, "Loner With A Boner." ★ ★ ★ 1/2

**SEX, LOVE & MONEY** *ERA* (Rockworld) Quite possibly the blandest hard rock record ever made. And that says a lot coming from someone who thinks the first Rush album kicks ass. ★ ★

*Jeff Gilbert is the author of the book,* Do Mermaids Pee In The Ocean? *(Really)*

★ ★ ★ 1/2
**THE BOTTLEROCKETS**
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FROM THE WORKING-CLASS suburbs of St. Louis (probably somewhere near the Budweiser bottling plant) comes this country-rock offering of surprising grit and gusto. Led by former Uncle Tupelo guitar tech and sideman Brian Henneman, the Bottlerockets may have crafted the perfect time capsule of the downwardly mobile Nineties—songs of blue collar disaffection and alienation, trailer parks and failed relationships. You can almost smell the gasoline and warm

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## REVIEWS

beer reeking through every twanging, gut-wrenching guitar solo.

I must admit, however, that the Botllerockets can overstate their class-conscious case. (After hearing the first song—the embarrassingly heavy-handed "Welfare Music"—I almost donated the album to my least favorite conservative charity.) But mostly the Botllerockets' second album is filled with great, catchy pop tunes, with just enough of a country lilt to satisfy folks below the Mason-Dixon line. Henneman's rough, leathery voice and gutsy guitar parts do indeed evoke the Tupelos at times, although the Rockets' sound is much more traditional, barroom-style rock and roll. Perfect listening with long-neck Bud in hand.

**—ELI G. ATTIE**

★★★
**COME**
don't ask don't tell
MATADOR

EXPERTS SAY THAT unless addicts learn to come to terms with the lives they once led, they can never completely recover from the disease. In her previous work, Come's Thalia Zadek was very open about her struggles with the needle; now, in recovery, she is grappling powerfully with the ravages of the past. On Come's second full-length effort, *don't ask don't tell* (Matador), we are confronted by her controlled catharsis. It will be tough going for those seeking the comforts of familiar pop hooks, but for anyone who thrills to guitars resonating in all their glory amidst crafted and nuanced songs there are a wealth of rewarding moments. Zadek and fellow guitarist Chris Brokaw rework the classical rock format and, through attention to dynamics and time changes, create claustrophobic structures of desolate gray that frame the oppressive langour of Zadek's vocals. The resulting tunes are so saturated with longing and regret that they should have even the most emotionally stout-hearted listener gasping for air. Zadek's self-loathing may cause some to squirm, but those who stay with it will, like her, emerge purified by the power of these songs.

**—DAVID GRAD**

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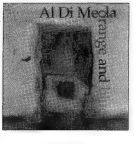



★ ★ ★ 1/2
**AL DIMEOLA**
Orange And Blue
BLUEMOON

WITH THIS ALBUM, Al DiMeola succeeds at two difficult tasks: making the transition from noted player to noted composer and creating soothing, ambient music which won't put the listener into a coma. The result is a work of sublime, yet fiercely intricate, beauty.

Returning to electric guitar after a three-year hiatus from the instrument, DiMeola turns to a big-bodied jazz model rather than his old Les Paul, lending his famous speed-picked sprints a softer, fluorescent shade. But the emphasis here is on the song structure. DiMeola's continued maturation as a composer is reflected in his solos (improvisation, after all, is nothing but speeded-up composition) as he zigzags effortlessly through the dense, polyrhythmic terrain.

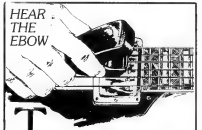
Actually, if you look under the music's hood, DiMeola really hasn't changed that much. His love for syncopated 6/8 workouts and Mediterranean and Eastern sounds remains apparent, and you can detect references to his Return To Forever tenure, especially in his languid recasting of "Theme From The Mothership" (from RTF's *Hymn Of The Seventh Galaxy*). And "Casimir," with its frenetic, odd-time guitar/percussion/drums dialogue, sounds like it could have been plucked right from *Elegant Gypsy* or *Casino*. The only difference now is that DiMeola is finding different—and better—ways to say what he has to say.

**—TONY GREEN**

★ ★ ★ 1/2
**MONSTER MAGNET**
Dopes To Infinity
A&M

SINCE SURFACING ON Caroline Records three years ago, Monster Magnet have made clear their love for Black Sabbath and psychedelic drugs. But the real strength of their songwriting has largely been veiled by a dense cloud of power chords and noisy guitar effects. With their third full-length record, *Dopes To Infinity*, however, Monster Magnet clear away the smoke screen, expressing a range of skill and emotion thus far only hinted at. Not that the record is any less heavy or mind-warping than last year's *Superjudge*; it's just more cohesive. Songs like "Negasonic Teenage Warhead" and "All Friends & Kingdom Come" still drip with molten riffs and shimmering melodies, but even the frenzied freak-out jams of "I Control" and the title track are sculpted with alarming intent. While the band was once at the mercy of the substances it ingested, these days it merely uses these chemicals to channel a more evocative range of sounds and textures. From the slow and classic-sounding cuts ("Blow 'Em Off," "King Of Mars") to voraciously hallucinogenic ones ("Vertigo," "Ego, The Living Planet"), *Dopes To Infinity* is by far Monster Magnet's most dynamic and varied record to date—an abundant stash of soundscapes for every occasion.

**—JON WIEDERHORN**

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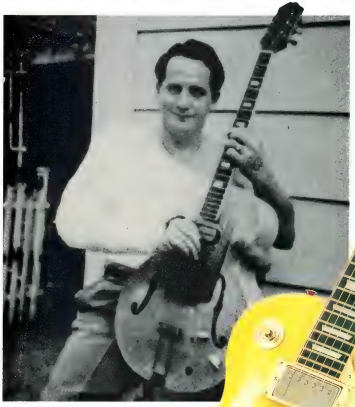

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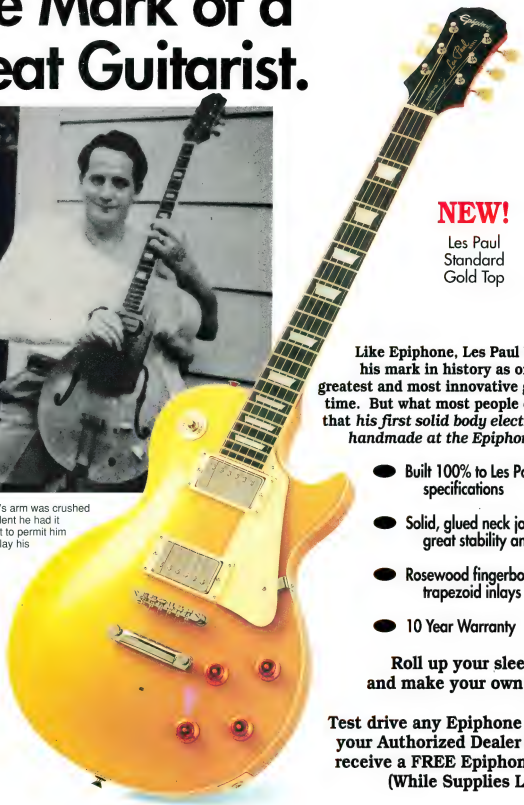

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# A TONIC FOR YOUR PENTATONICS

## Breathing new life into humdrum pentatonic licks.

IN MY APRIL '94 COLUMN, I described ways to spice up simple blues licks. You might recall that by adding tones such as the ninth or lowered fifth and by manipulating melodic and rhythmic contour, you can avoid the clichés that are often associated with pentatonic "box" patterns. This month, using licks from a couple of Dream Theater songs, I'll show you how to apply these concepts to real-life musical situations.

**FIGURE 1**, an excerpt from the solo in "Voices," enters at 7:59 into the tune. It's a great study in contour, as cascading intervals resolve to an ascending machine-gun sequence that accents the first note of each downbeat and upbeat. I start by bending up to the lowered third (C) from the ninth (D), and descend down the A minor-pentatonic scale using a pattern of fourths.

In the second measure of **FIGURE 1**, I use an ascending melodic sequence, also based on the A minor-pentatonic scale. I adapted this move from a more-common descending sequence that guitarists such as Warren DiMartini or George Lynch favor (**FIGURE 2**)—I simply flipped it around! Listen to how just one extra note, the flatted fifth (Eb), adds a clever, bluesy twist to the whole line. Make sure you follow the tablature—the pull-offs are crucial to making this lick sound right.

There's another interesting lick 4:37 into "Lie" (**FIGURE 3**), where the ninth (C#), lowered fifth (F) and sixth (G#) are added to the B minor-pentatonic scale. I played the run in the second and third measures using alternate (down and up) picking. This enabled me to accent certain notes, which in turn made the rhythm more precise. Most guitarists would have played it legato, using hammer-ons and pull-offs. It certainly is a lot easier to play the run this way, but I don't think it sounds as good—the downbeats aren't defined as well, and the nature of the legato technique lends itself to taking shortcuts which result in sloppiness. Bear in mind that the correct execution of this line is not a matter of speed, but a matter of *definition*. If you play it cleanly, evenly and in time, even a short lick such as this one will stand out in a solo, and you'll sound like you're playing with conviction and authority.

As you can see, with a little bit of creativity you can breathe new life into even the most ordinary pentatonic ideas. Keep experimenting! ●

FIGURE 1

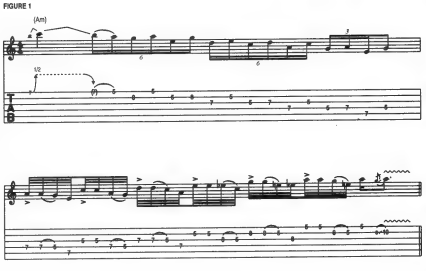



FIGURE 2

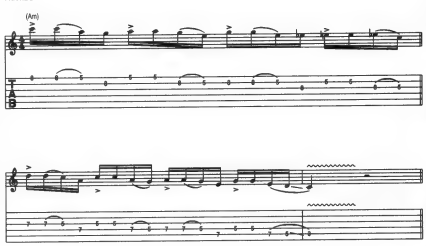
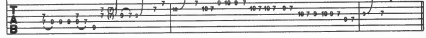



FIGURE 3

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# THE SOUND + THE FURY

BY KIRK HAMMETT

## ...AND ANSWERS FOR ALL!

How I feel about shredding.

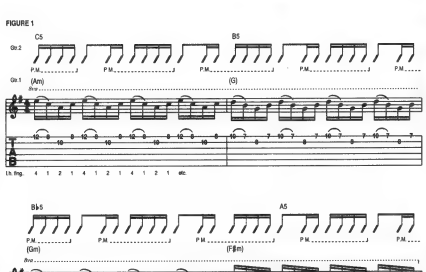
**Dear Kirk,**
**I remember reading an interview with James Hetfield, just after *Metallica* was released, where he said, "When we hear Kirk sweeping an arpeggio we wanna hit him!" Are you guys really that down on shred techniques like sweep picking arpeggios?**
**—Roger Pinto,**
**Farmingdale, NY**

**P.S. "The Sound + The Fury" rules!**

I can remember James saying something like that in an interview! Anyway, regarding sweep-picked arpeggios, whether you like it or not, ever since Yngwie [*Malmsteen*] emerged, that technique has become one of the biggest clichés of modern rock. As a result, nowadays I think they tend to alienate certain people—they hear a string of lightning-fast arpeggios and immediately go, "See ya!" This isn't because sweep-picking arpeggios is necessarily a bad thing, but just because the idea has been so overused, it's automatically associated with being musically pretentious. That's why the technique has become a definite "no, no" in Metallica.

When I was younger, I was definitely into cramming as much fast and impressive stuff into my solos as I possibly could! As I matured as a musician, though, I began to realize that sometimes you've gotta give the big finger to technical stuff and do what's best for the band's music. And, as I've said more than once in this column, a lot of the time, what's best is often something relatively simple and bluesy.

Although I still enjoy playing in a high-tech way every once in a while, nowadays I'm definitely into space and sustain—I'm always trying to work more space into my playing. A lot of "shredders" don't seem to realize how space can be used constructively—they're just hell-bent on impressing you with how many notes they can fit in! To me these guys sound like they're hyperventilating musically. The reason "shred" has earned such a bad rap is because so many players don't use technique tastefully or constructively. Sure, Yngwie can play incredibly fast but there's *always* a lot of feeling and emotion in what he does—and that's what it's all about. Remember, music isn't supposed to be pretentious.

FIGURE 1

I'm certainly not knocking everyone who plays lightning-fast sweep-picked arpeggios, as my above comment about Yngwie demonstrates. It can be mind blowing, provided the technique is used sparingly *and* musically. I mean, Ulrich Roth employs sweep arpeggios amazingly and Yngwie—the guy largely responsible for this whole mess—uses them brilliantly too!

Actually, thanks to [*jazz saxophonist*] John Coltrane, I have a new-found respect for arpeggios because he played a hell of a lot of them, and they were *always* part of a very melodic idea. He *never* used them just as a means to jerk off! One thing some players don't realize about arpeggios is that you don't have to follow the exact same chord sequence that the rhythm guitar is playing in order to come up with a cool arpeggio line that *works*. A good example of what I'm talking about here happens in the title track of our *Ride The Lightning* album.

During the solo there's a section where the rhythm guitar plays a power-chord sequence that chromatically descends from C5 to A5, just like Guitar 1 does in **FIGURE 1**. If I'd wanted to use arpeggios and play it safe, I guess I could have just played a straightforward mixture of major and minor arpeggios that exactly followed that C-B-Bb-A sequence—like C-Bm-Bb-Am, for example. Instead, though, I came up with the Am-G-Gm-F#m arpeggio sequence played by guitar 2 in **FIGURE 1**.

At first glance, my choice of arpeggios might seem completely unrelated to the backing chords but, believe me, it's not! Let me explain: if you look at the second and fourth 16th note of each arpeggio you'll see that the C-B-Bb-A sequence *is* being followed. Just so you know, each of these four notes is called a *common tone* because it is found in both the backing chord and the arpeggio being played over it.

Try experimenting with this *common tone* idea when playing arpeggios over some chord sequences of your own, and don't be afraid to make mistakes! We all make them from time to time and, if you're wise, you can learn from them. Also, don't be afraid to incorporate some breathing space in your solos. Otherwise you'll hyperventilate—and that's a definite no-no! I'll see you next issue. ●

Photo by Marc Greco; typography by Steven Curtis

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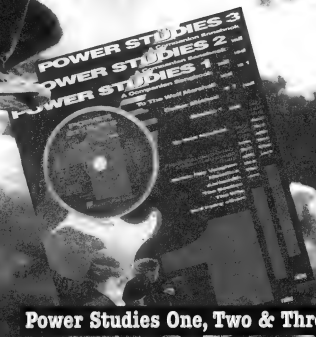


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# RIFFER MADNESS

BY DIAMOND DARRELL

# DEAR DIME! PART IV

The answer to a cool "Feedback Sack" question about warming up.

STILL GOING ON your questions! If there's anything you wanna know, let's have it out here. I've got nothing to hide, man! Write me at Darrell's Feedback Sack, 301 W. 53rd St., Suite 11D, New York, NY 10019.

**Dear Dimebag,**
**I was wondering if there was any type of warm-up exercises you do before playing, and is there anything you do before a show to get yourself pumped up? I have this problem of getting too tense and not being able to relax on stage. Hope you can help. Thanks. A huge fan.**

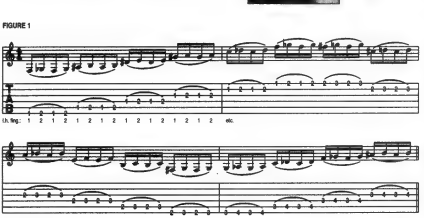
**—Frank Corenz,**
**Melrose Place, IL**

My warm up routine, which I've basically been doing since I was real young, is where I got a lot of my trilling [*hammer-ons and pull-offs*] chops. All I do is combine symmetrical trills with chromatics. I start off doing a one-fret trill between the 1st and 2nd frets of the low E string with my index and middle fingers (see **FIGURE 1**) and then take the trill across each of the strings in turn from low to high. When I get to the high E string I scoot up a fret and then do the exact same thing back across the strings from high to low. I'll continue to do this all the way up the neck until I get to about the 15th fret. By this time I'll be feeling a pretty good burn in the back of my left hand, so I'll shake it out to get some blood flow happening to my fingers. Then I'll do the same exact thing between my index and ring finger (see **FIGURE 2**) and then again between my index finger and pinky (see **FIGURE 3**). By the time I've done all this my left hand is real loose.

To get my right hand happening I'll play along with whatever is playing on the dressing room stereo. I don't play the riff or anything, though, but just chug out eighth notes [*two even notes per beat*] on my low E string using down strokes. If the tempo is too slow I'll play double-time against it by playing 16th notes [*four even notes per beat*]. Then, once my right arm hurts from doing that, I'll do some double-picking [*alternate picking*] shit. **FIGURE 4** shows a simple exercise I use that alternates between downstrokes and alternate picking. I'll play this pattern over and over until I feel a burn in my picking arm. Then I'll stop, shake out my right arm, rest for a second and then do it again. Man, after you do this a couple of times, it feels like you've been playing for an hour!

Once I've done all this, I work on getting my right hand and left hand locked in together by playing some licks and riffs. Then I'm ready to go.

As for getting relaxed before going on stage: right off the bat, I can tell you this—you don't wanna end up like me, bro! Before I go out and jam I drink six or so beers and do 10 shots of Seagrams Seven but I don't pop any pills or smoke any weed.....Only kidding! What I really do is this: once I've done my playing warm-up I also like to make sure my whole body is loose. I don't really do any incredible workout shit; all I do is stretch my body out and get my blood flowing. Then, I just go out there and attack man! I know a lot of people skitz out when they have to play in front of an audience, and to me that's a waste of energy. What I do is channel all that nervous energy into my jam. If you're playing aggressive stuff like we do, it's pretty easy to do that. So, don't go out there and just pitter about—stomp some ass, m#$%*!#$&*er! ●

FIGURE 1

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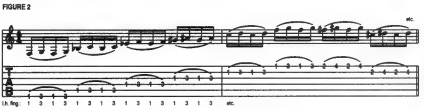


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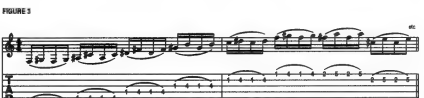
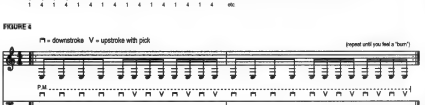


FIGURE 4

## SLASH

*continued from page 80*

member by member.

What can you hear on my record? I think just the simplicity of having two guitars, using up very few tracks and just jamming. There's not a hell of a lot of stuff on the tape. We just take mistakes for what they are and say fuck it, leave it on there, 'cause the vibe is right.

**GW:** What mistakes can be heard on the record?

**SLASH:** There's one good one on that instrumental tune, "Jizz Da Pit ." I played a more or less smoking-style guitar solo on there. When I went to New York to mix the record, they called me at the hotel and said, "There's no guitar solo." So I went down to the studio, went through the two-tracks, the safeties, the masters; the guitar solo had been erased. I had to rent an amp—luckily I had a guitar I brought with me—and had to do that solo in the mixing studio real quick. It was two takes, I think. That was a serious *faux pas*, as far as I was concerned. The other things aren't major mistakes, really. You know how music is; it's not perfect, but there's no reason to go back and fix it. It's not like there's a ton of harmonies on there, although there are places I can see where we could make it more involved as far as layers go, and it would sound great all orchestrated. But we didn't do that. When I listen to the record later, I might say, "We could've done that here or there," but it doesn't matter. The general idea is there. This record has a nice nudity to it. [*laughs*]

**GW:** What kind of guitars did you use on the album?

**SLASH:** I used the same one I used for all of *Appetite For Destruction* and most of the main rhythm tracks on the *Use Your Illusions*. It's a handmade Les Paul replica with two Seymour Duncan Alnico pickups in it. The only reason I didn't use that guitar for all of *Use Your Illusion* was because there were 36 songs to record and everything got very involved; I must have used 30 guitars because there so many different textures and sounds I wanted. There are only 14 songs on the new record and I don't know if it seems repetitious, but I went for the same basic sound throughout.

I did use a 12-string Les Paul for the Snakepit, too; I don't know if anyone's ever seen one of those—I have a prototype. I used it on "I Hate Everybody But You." It's really cool, and it's a little closer to a Les Paul than a Ric would be, which is why I like it.

**GW:** Is it a great perk to get free guitars?

**SLASH:** To tell you the truth, when Guns N' Roses first started touring, I had three main stage guitars, all Les Pauls that I've had since 1986—and I *bought* them. They haven't really given me a Les Paul Standard or a reissue that has compared to those. They're all beat to shit, but that's what I take on the road. I do have a black doubleneck that works fine that I got them to make for me, but for the most part I treat everything pretty much the same as when we first started. I'm just a little better financially prepared to deal with it now. [*laughs*]

**GW:** What amps did you use on this album?

**SLASH:** Just a couple of Marshall 100-watts, and one or two slant cabinets.

**GW:** It sounds like you used effects very sparingly, if at all.

**SLASH:** I used a wah wah pedal on the solo of "Be The Ball" and a voice box on "Lower." There's also acoustic guitar on some songs. The rest of it is pretty much straight ahead.

**GW:** What was your home studio like before it was destroyed by the earthquake?

**SLASH:** Tiny. When we first did the demos, it was just me and Matt on a Kat kit. It is just an eight-by-fifteen-foot room. The studio's now dysfunctional because of the earthquake; my house is getting torn down.

**GW:** What happened to you during the quake?

**SLASH:** I was home when it hit. The omen was that that night we had actually recorded and mixed three songs instead of leaving the mix 'til the next day. When the earthquake hit, I had just finished in the studio and had the demos in my hand when the house took a flying turn for the worse.

What was cool about the quake was that everything I cared about was fine. The whole material aspect of the house and everything in it didn't fucking matter. I grabbed my wife and we took off for Chicago—I had someone take care of the cats and the snakes. Everything else was busted, but it didn't matter.

Basically, all I need are my bag with some clothes in it and my old lady. Everything I cared about was all right; it was very grounding in that sense. I think it was a good wake-up call for L.A. "Okay, you fucking bunch of lazy motherfuckers. Let's wake up, kids!"

**GW:** What are you going to do with the house?

**SLASH:** We're just gonna tear it down, put it back up and sell it. We're renting a house back in Hollywood. It's close to where the music business is. I'm just back on my home turf; I feel more comfortable.

**GW:** The Snakepit album has a couple of dark songs on it, a couple that deal with suicide in particular. What's up there?

**SLASH:** I don't know. Every so often, I go to the record store and pick up a Tool record or an Offspring record, and the overall tone with bands these days seems to be unbelievably depressing. I didn't think anything on my record would be close to that.

Everything I write has a positive nature to it; it's not that there's necessarily any kind of message, but there's a positive vibe even if it might be about a dark subject. I was listening to the Tool record in the car the other day, and I had to take it off; it was too fucking down. It's nice to have a light at the end of the tunnel. Even though I understand where the blues come from, in the current generation, there's no reason for any of those people to be fucking bummed out—especially if they have a record being released by a label. I mean, I love Soundgarden. I still love Nirvana, regardless of Kurt and his fucking trip, which I thought was just sort of pointless. I understand life is frustrating, but it's not like he was laying bricks or something. I just don't understand where the major problem is all the time. Look at what we do; we don't have to worry about how our hair looks every day or wear a tie or punch a clock.

I can understand people who can't get a break killing themselves. Those people who are trying to make it probably get really pissed when some idiot shoots himself after he gets to Number One. I mean with Kurt, there was all this talk about him being the next Lennon, but someone shot Lennon. He had more balls than Kurt; he kept going and kept working. That's a whole different kind of hero in my book.

**GW:** You mentioned the blues earlier. It seems that the main point of the blues is to seek redemption out of the darkness.

**SLASH:** That's right. Blues musicians might have dealt with dark subject matter, but they were always looking for the positive angle. It was, "I forge ahead. I play the blues to get it off my mind so that I can get up the next day and keep moving forward."

**GW:** Don't you go through some of this with Axl, too? He's kind of willfully unhappy.

**SLASH:** I don't know where he's coming from. I know he's a tortured soul. And regardless of what people might think, Axl is a good guy. He does have a lot on his mind, and you can't expect to understand that just as you can't expect to understand the average person that you don't know. At the same time, because he's a public figure, and he's sometimes publicly violent, people have a chance to analyze what they read or the way they see him act onstage. I'm sure there are people out there who identify with the pain in the lyrics, but being in the band myself, it's hard for me to take them that seriously. A lot of the lyrics where Axl's most painful moments come out just don't relate to my outlook on life.

**GW:** You're just a happy camper, right?

**SLASH:** That's me. [*laughs*] There's a song on the album called "Doing Fine" that kind of sums it up: Everything's fine, man. Actually, it doesn't sum shit up—it was just a fun moment when we did it. That's the way it is in the Snakepit. ●

# "Hot for Teacher"

WORDS AND MUSIC BY EDWARD VAN HALEN, ALEX VAN HALEN, MICHAEL ANTHONY AND DAVID LEE ROTH

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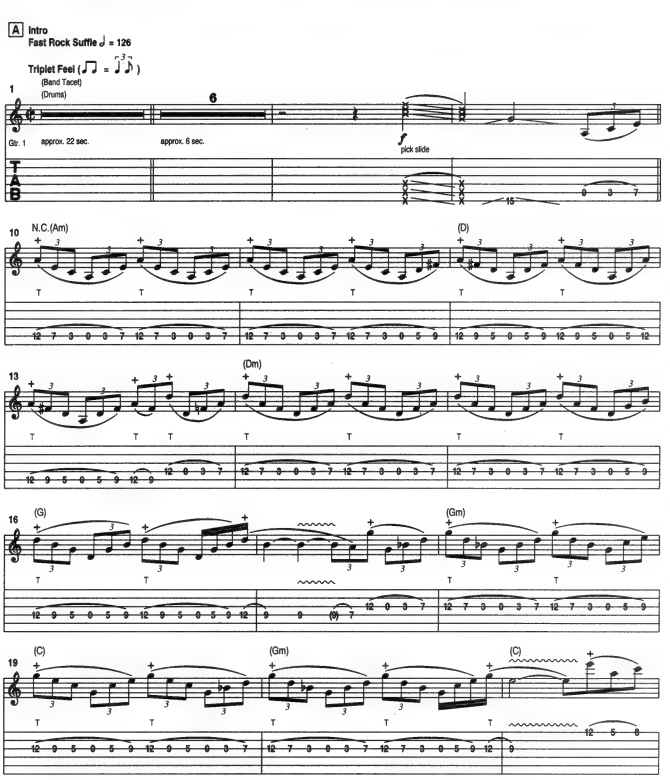


**As heard on the Van Halen's Warner Bros. recording *1984***

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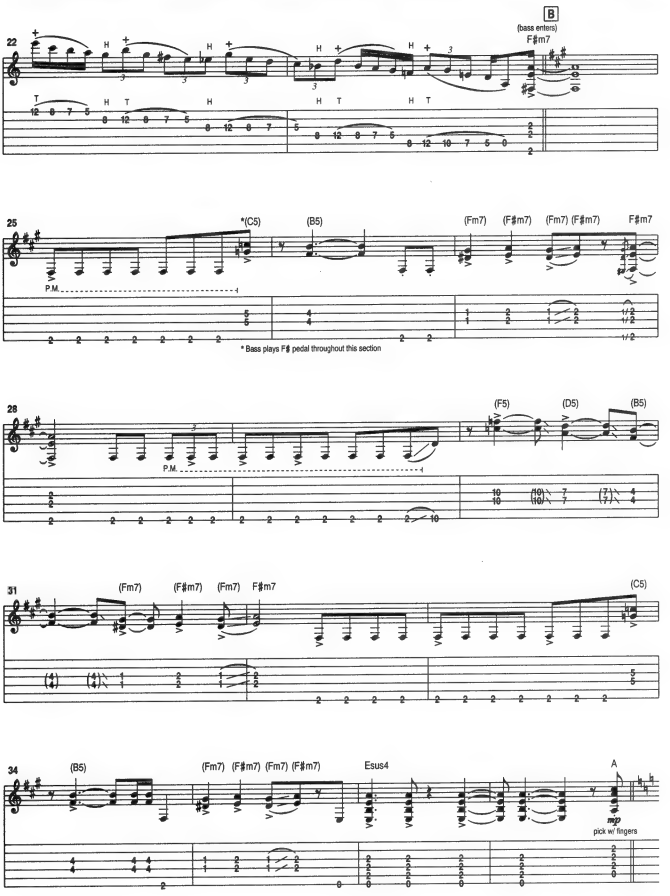
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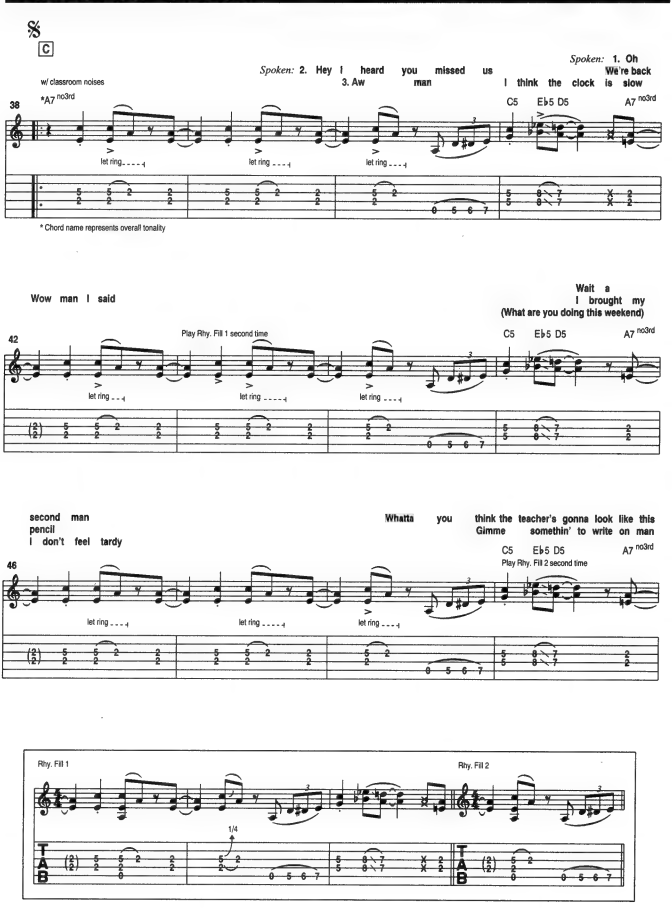
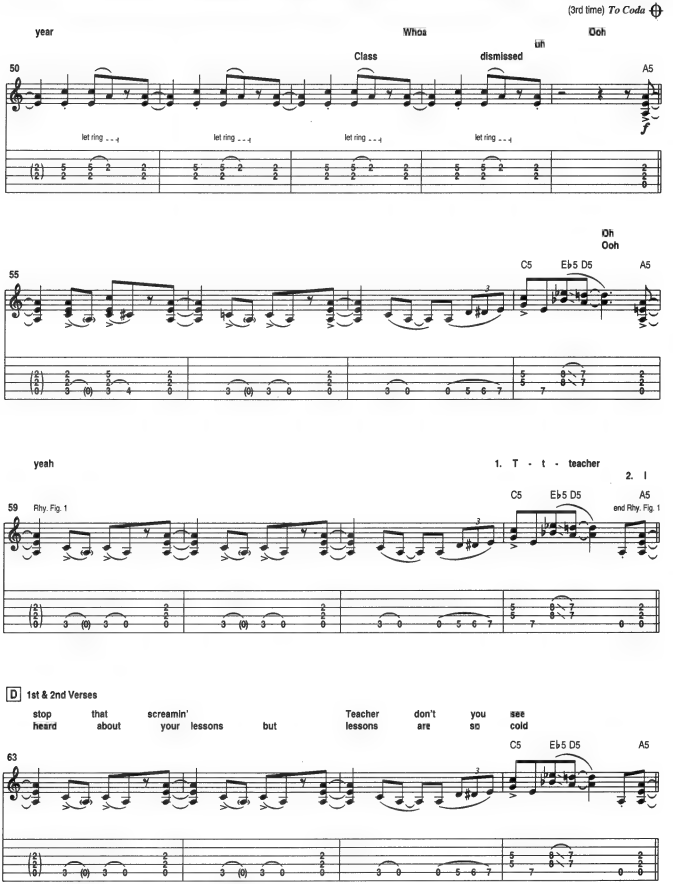
28
(F5)
(D5)
(B5)
P.M.
31
(Fm7)
(F♯m7)
(Fm7)
F♯m7
(C5)
34
(B5)
(Fm7)
(F♯m7)
(Fm7)
(F♯m7)
Esus4
A
mp
pick w/ fingers


C
w/ classroom noises
*A7 no3rd
38
Spoken: 2. Hey I heard you missed us
3. Aw man
Spoken: 1. Oh We're back
I think the clock is slow
C5 E♭5 D5 A7 no3rd
let ring
* Chord name represents overall tonality
Wow man I said
Play Rhy. Fill 1 second time
42
Wait a
I brought my
(What are you doing this weekend)
C5 E♭5 D5 A7 no3rd
let ring
second man
pencil
I don't feel tardy
Whatta you
think the teacher's gonna look like this
Gimme somethin' to write on man
46
C5 E♭5 D5 A7 no3rd
Play Rhy. Fill 2 second time
let ring
Rhy. Fill 1
Rhy. Fill 2
1/4
T
A
B

(3rd time) To Coda
year
Whoa
uh
Ooh
Class
dismissed
50
A5
let ring
let ring
let ring
let ring
Oh
Ooh
55
C5
E♭5 D5
A5
yeah
1. T - t - teacher
2. I
59
Rhy. Fig. 1
C5
E♭5 D5
A5
end Rhy. Fig. 1
D 1st & 2nd Verses
stop that screamin' Teacher don't you see
heard about your lessons but lessons are so cold
63
C5
E♭5 D5
A5

Don't wanna be no uptown fool Maybe I should
I know about this school Little

67

C5 E♭5 D5 A5

Play Rhy. Fill 3 second time

Maybe I should go to hell But I am doing well
girl from Cherry Lawn how can you be so bold

71

C5 E♭5 D5 A5

Teacher needs to see me after school
How did you know that golden rule

75

C5 E♭5 D5 C5 D5

let ring

**E** Pre-chorus

I think of all the education that I missed

A♭5 G5 F5 G5

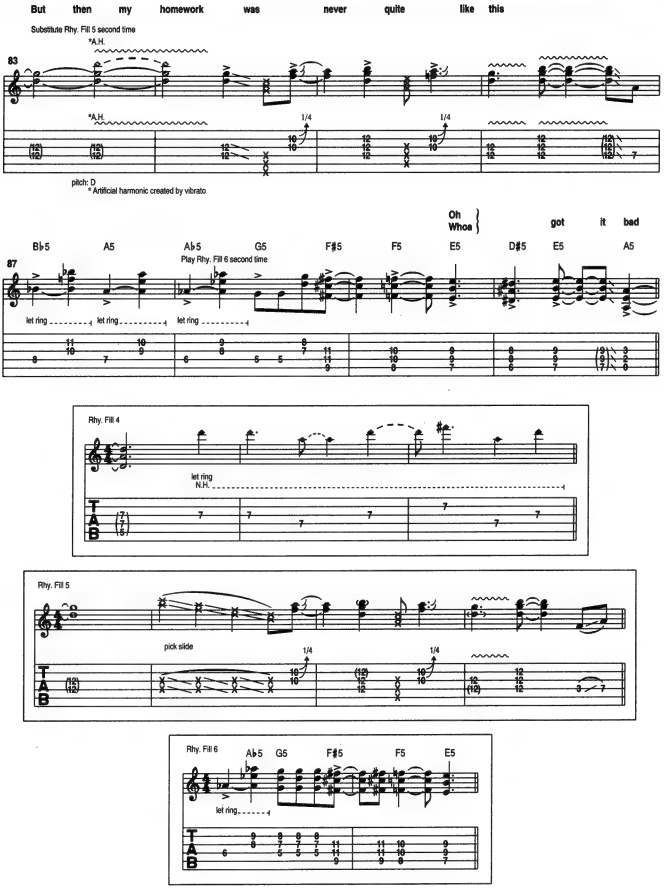
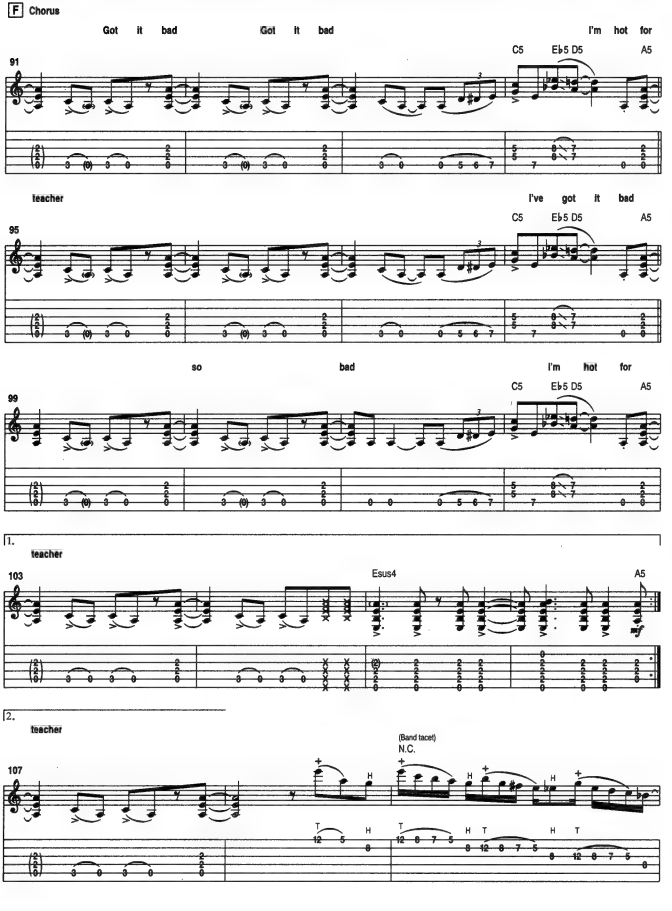
Substitute Rhy. Fill 4 second time

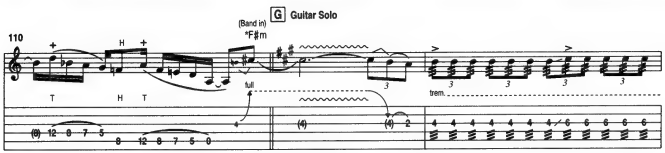
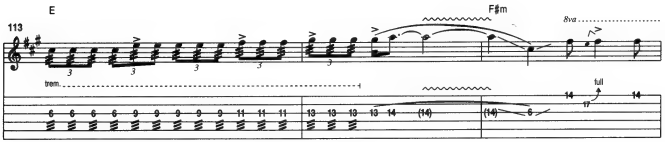
79

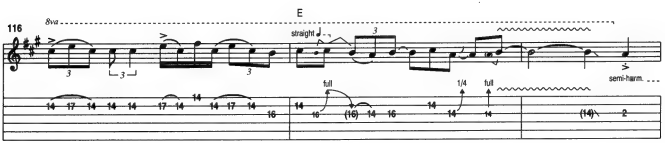
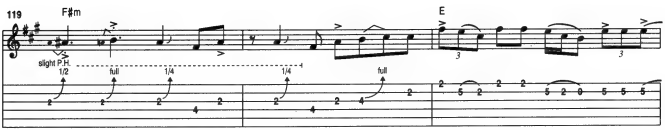
T.H. T.H. T.H.

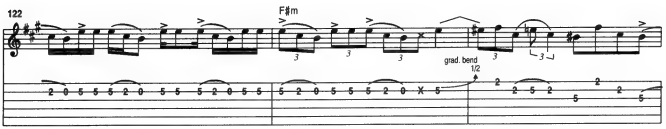
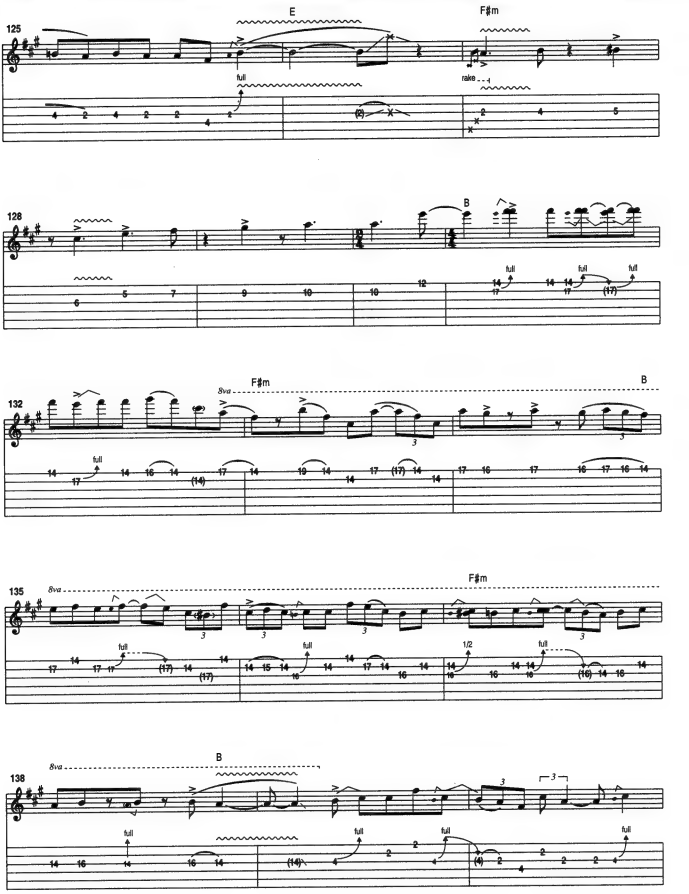
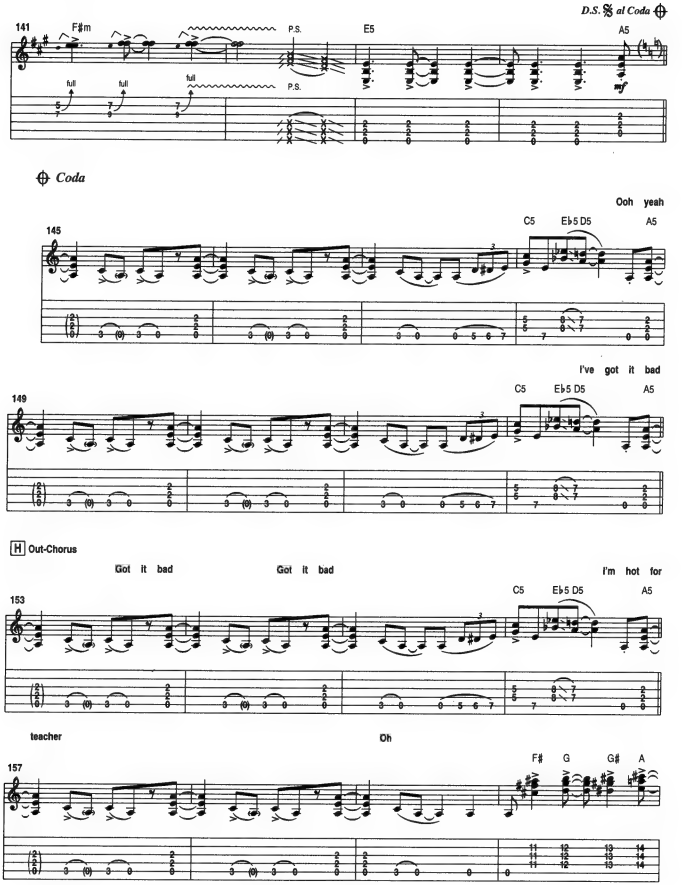
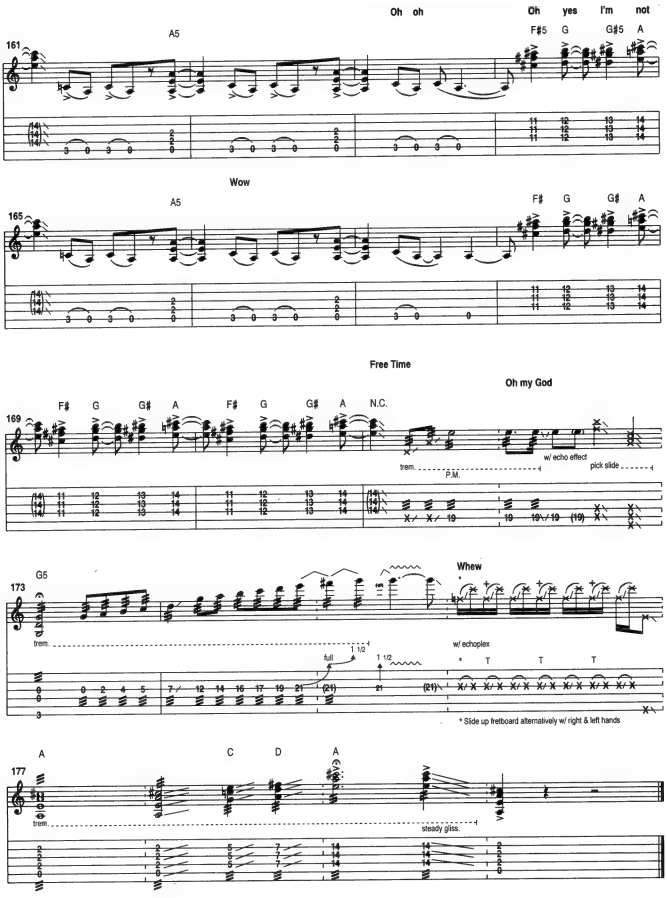
pick slide

T.H. T.H. T.H.

Rhy. Fill 3

But then my homework was never quite like this
Substitute Rhy. Fill 5 second time
*A.H.
83
*A.H.
1/4
1/4
pitch: D
* Artificial harmonic created by vibrato
Oh Whoa
got it bad
B♭5 A5 A♭5 G5 F♯5 F5 E5 D♯5 E5 A5
87
Play Rhy. Fill 6 second time
let ring
let ring
let ring
Rhy. Fill 4
let ring
N.H.
Rhy. Fill 5
pick slide
1/4
1/4
Rhy. Fill 6
A♭5 G5 F♯5 F5 E5
let ring
T
A
B

F Chorus
Got it bad
Got it bad
I'm hot for
C5
E♭5 D5
A5
91
teacher
I've got it bad
95
so
bad
I'm hot for
99
1.
teacher
103
Esus4
2.
teacher
(Band tacet)
N.C.
107

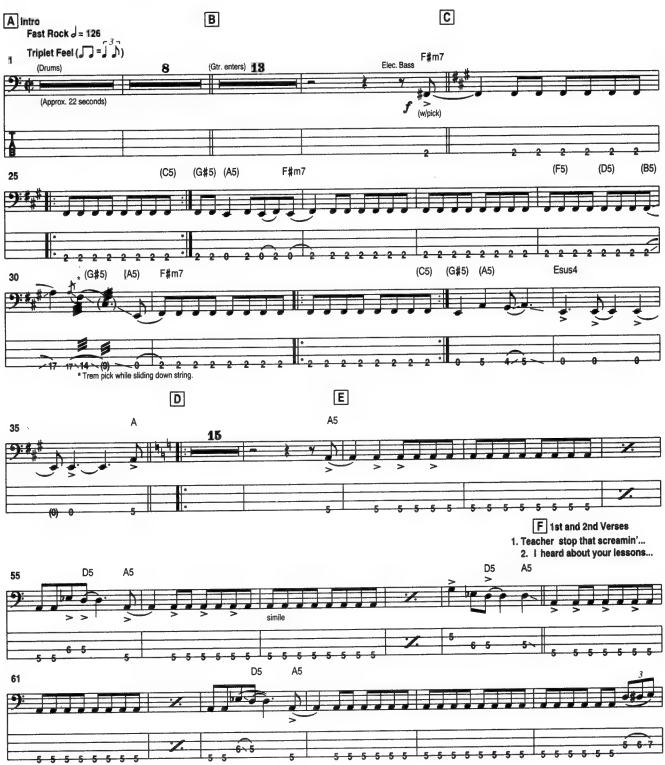

(Band in)
*F♯m
G Guitar Solo
110
full
trem.
* Chords implied by bassf figure

E
F♯m
113
8va
trem.
full


E
116
8va
straight
full
1/4
full
semi-harm.

119
F♯m
E
slight P.H.
1/2
full
1/4
1/4
full


122
F♯m
grad. bend
1/2

125
E
F♯m
full
rake
128
B
full
full
full
132
8va
F♯m
B
full
135
8va
F♯m
full
full
1/2
full
138
8va
B
full
full
full
full

D.S. 𝄋 al Coda ⊕
141
F♯m
P.S.
E5
A5
full
full
full
P.S.
mf
⊕ Coda
Ooh yeah
145
C5
E♭5 D5
A5
I've got it bad
149
C5
E♭5 D5
A5
H Out-Chorus
Got it bad
Got it bad
I'm hot for
153
C5
E♭5 D5
A5
teacher
Oh
157
F♯
G
G♯
A

Oh oh
Oh yes I'm not
161
A5
F#5 G G#5 A
Wow
165
A5
F# G G# A
Free Time
Oh my God
169
F# G G# A F# G G# A N.C.
trem.
P.M.
w/ echo effect
pick slide
173
G5
Whew
trem.
w/ echoplex
full
1 1/2
1 1/2
* Slide up fretboard alternatively w/ right & left hands
177
A C D A
trem.
steady gliss.

# "Hot for Teacher" (bassline)

**WORDS AND MUSIC BY EDWARD VAN HALEN, ALEX VAN HALEN, MICHAEL ANTHONY AND DAVID LEE ROTH**

**TRANSCRIBED BY ANDY ALEDORT**

**As heard on the Van Halen's Warner Bros. recording *1984***

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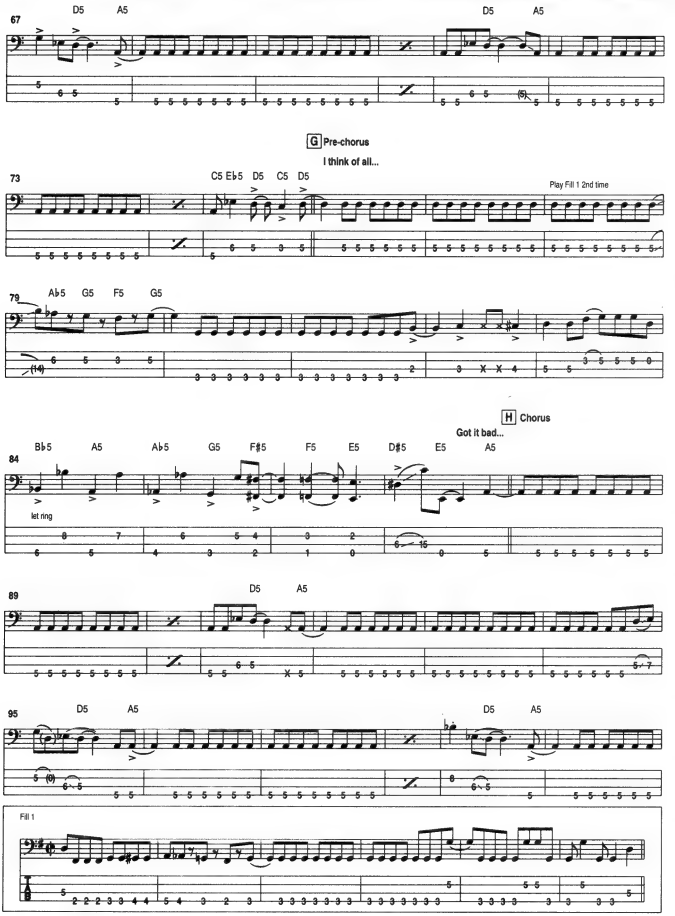
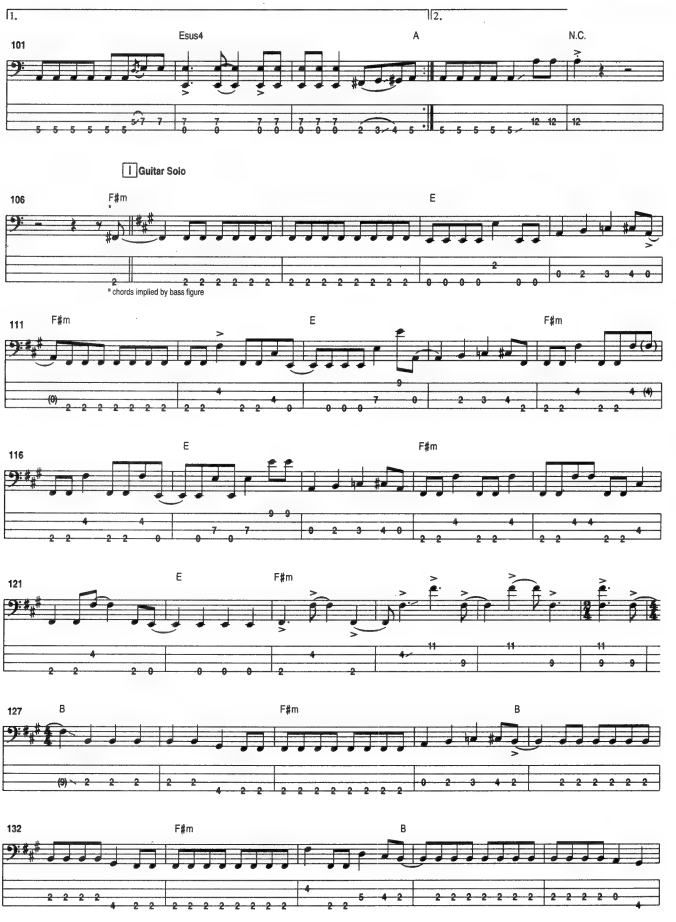
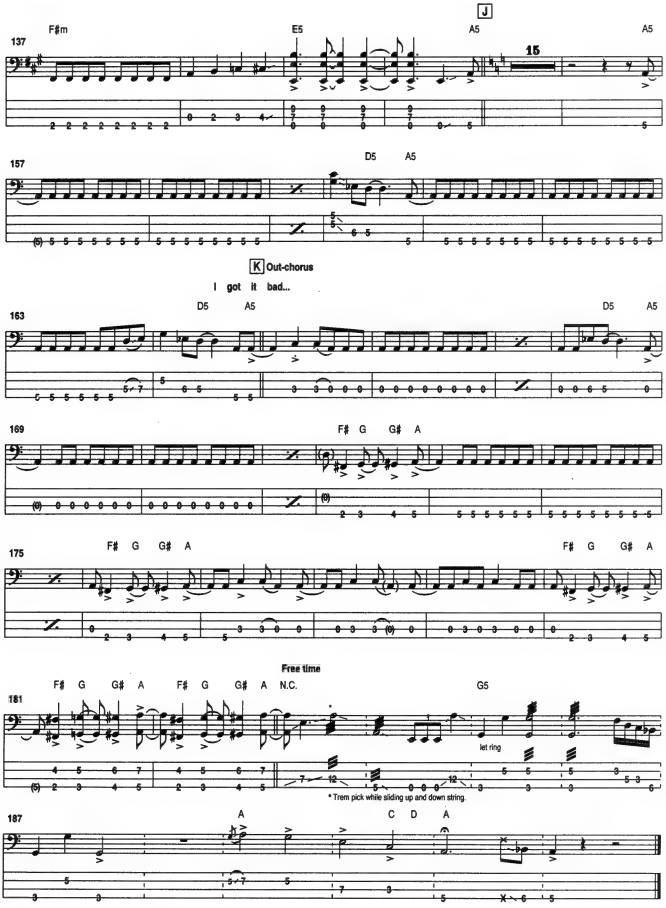

67
D5 A5
D5 A5
G Pre-chorus
I think of all...
73
C5 E♭5 D5 C5 D5
Play Fill 1 2nd time
79
A♭5 G5 F5 G5
(14)
H Chorus
Got it bad...
84
B♭5 A5 A♭5 G5 F♯5 F5 E5 D♯5 E5 A5
let ring
89
D5 A5
95
D5 A5
D5 A5
Fill 1

1.
2.
101
Esus4
A
N.C.
I Guitar Solo
106
F♯m
E
* chords implied by bass figure
111
F♯m
E
F♯m
116
E
F♯m
121
E
F♯m
127
B
F♯m
B
132
F♯m
B

J
F#m
E5
A5
A5
137
15
157
D5
A5
K Out-chorus
I got it bad...
163
D5
A5
D5
A5
169
F# G G# A
175
F# G G# A
F# G G# A
Free time
F# G G# A F# G G# A N.C.
181
G5
let ring
* Trem pick while sliding up and down string.
187
A
C D A

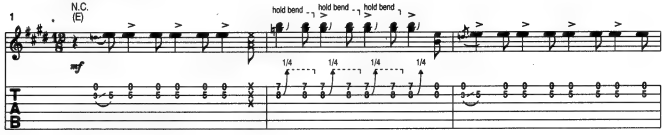
# "Pride And Joy"

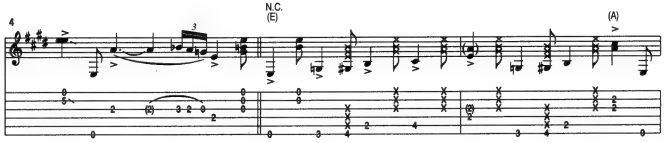
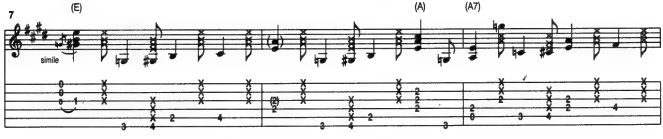
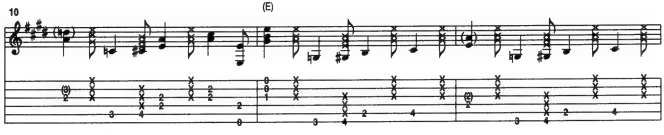
**WORDS AND MUSIC BY STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN** **TRANSCRIBED BY ANDY ALEDORT**

**12-string Acoustic**
**Tune down one half step (low to high: E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭)**

**A Intro**

**Moderate Blues Shuffle ♩. = 116**




* All pitches sound one half step lower than written.

**As heard on the Warner Bros. recording *The Unplugged Collection: Volume One***

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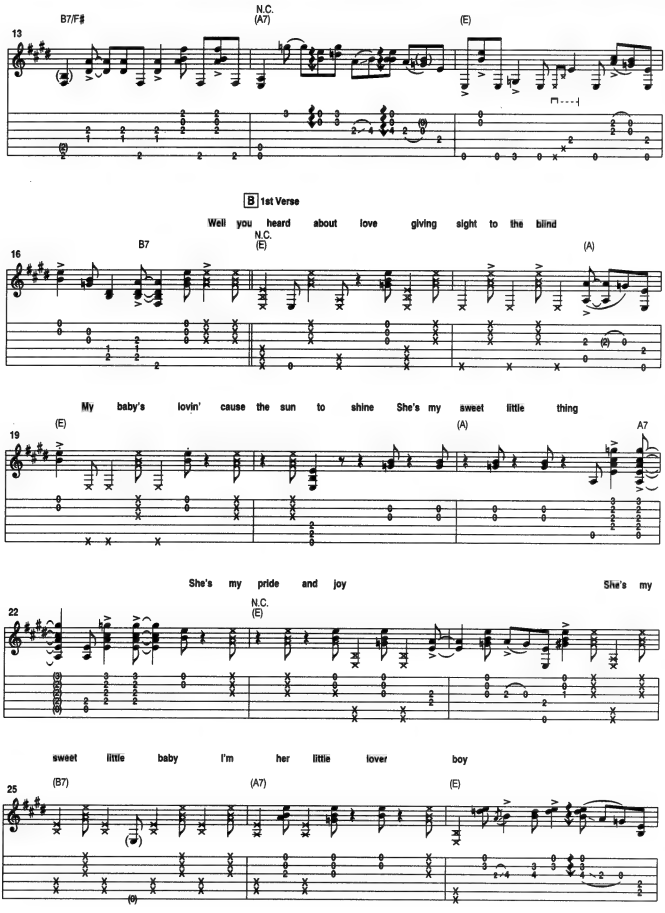
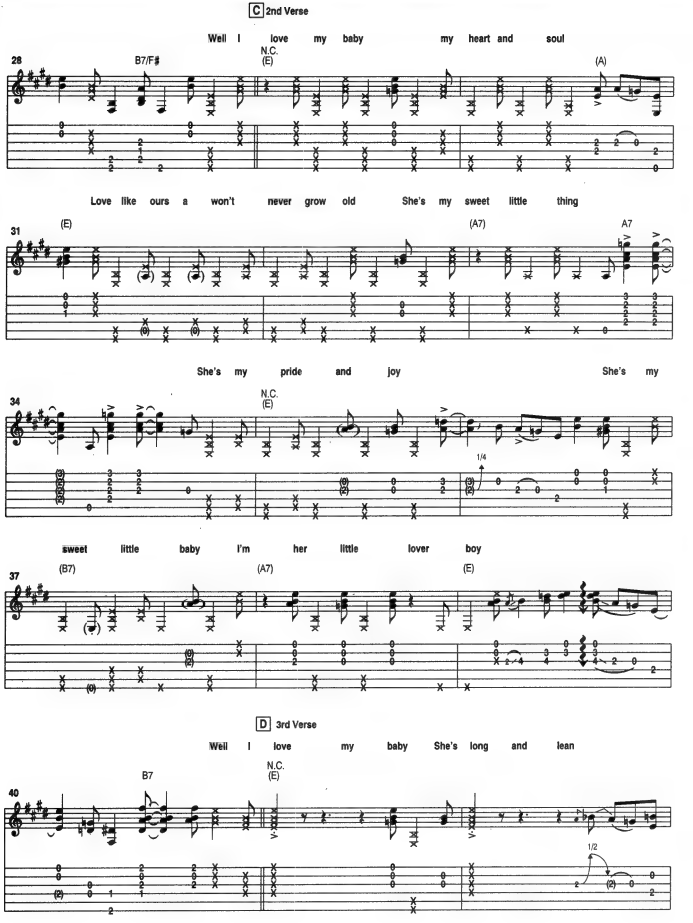
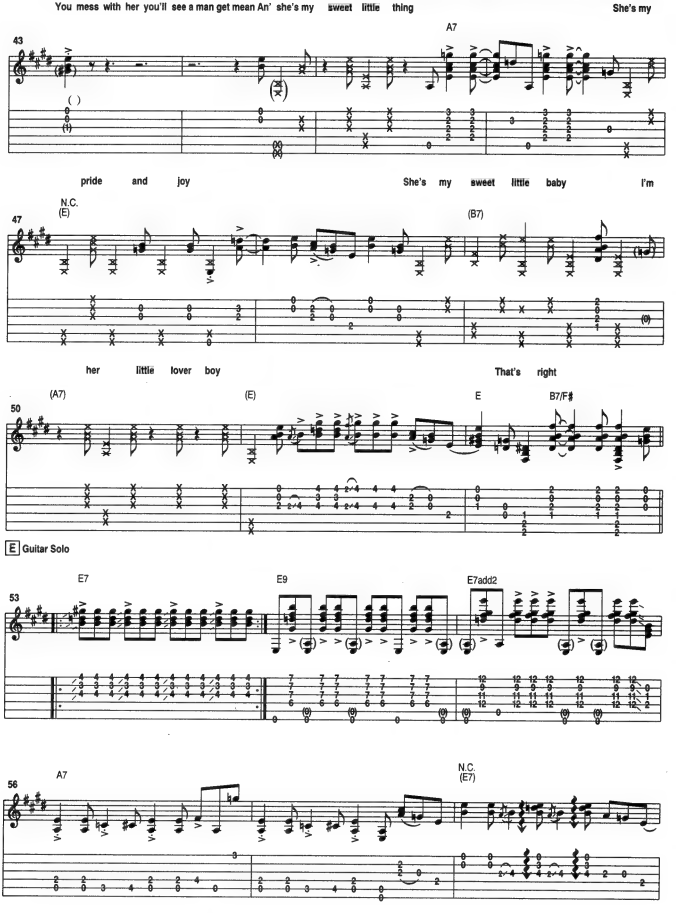
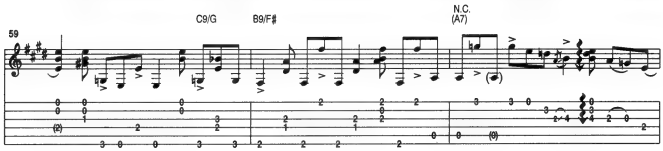
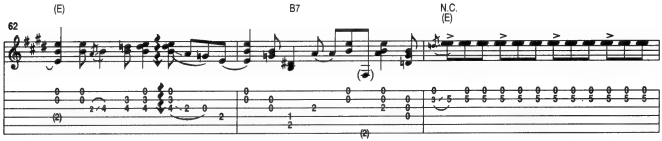
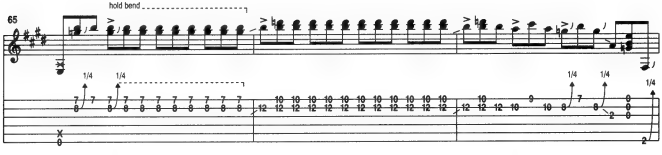
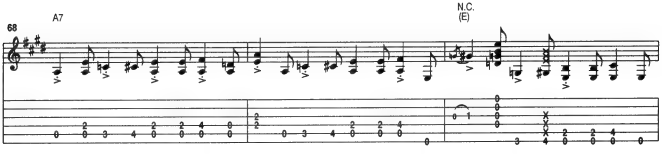
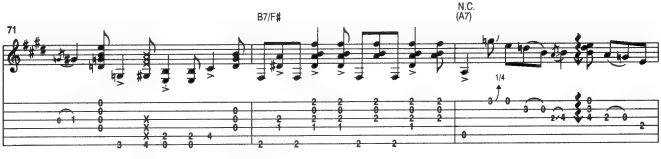
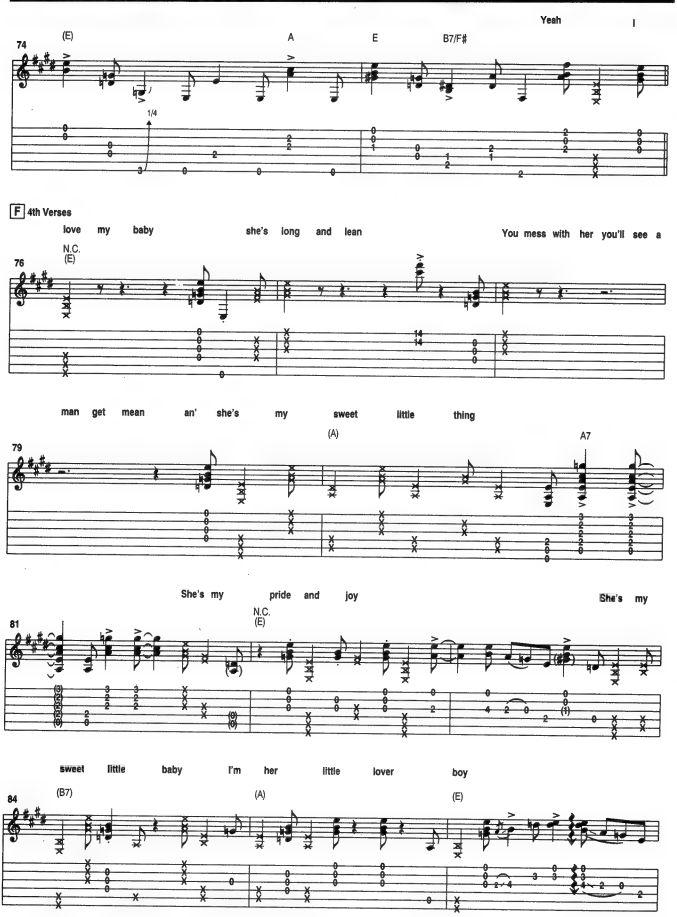
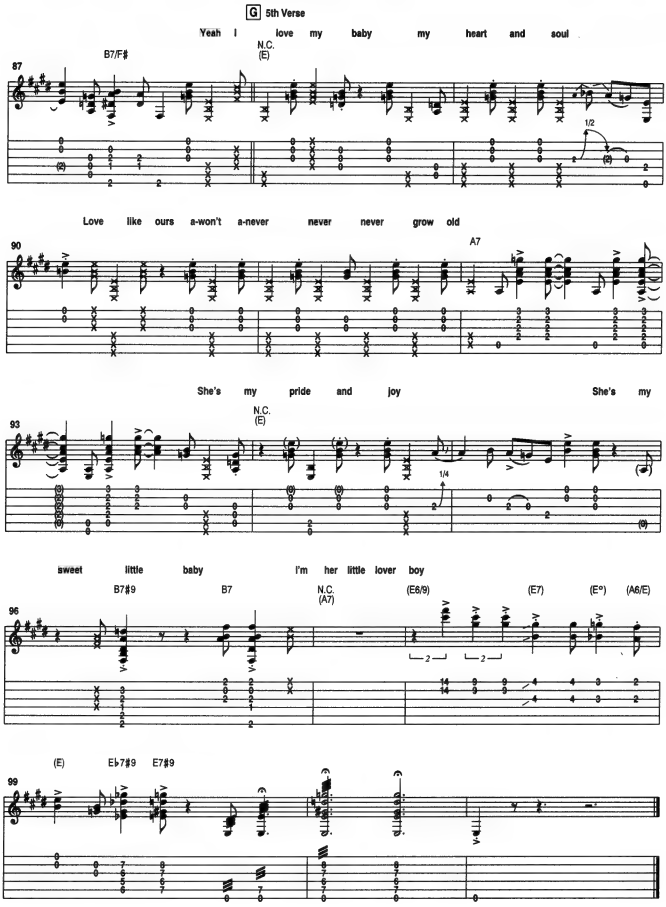

B7/F♯
N.C.
(A7)
(E)
13
B 1st Verse
Well you heard about love giving sight to the blind
B7
N.C.
(E)
(A)
16
My baby's lovin' cause the sun to shine She's my sweet little thing
(E)
(A)
A7
19
She's my pride and joy
She's my
N.C.
(E)
22
sweet little baby I'm her little lover boy
(B7)
(A7)
(E)
25


C 2nd Verse
Well I love my baby my heart and soul
28
B7/F♯
N.C.
(E)
(A)
Love like ours a won't never grow old She's my sweet little thing
31
(E)
(A7)
A7
She's my pride and joy She's my
34
N.C.
(E)
1/4
sweet little baby I'm her little lover boy
37
(B7)
(A7)
(E)
D 3rd Verse
Well I love my baby She's long and lean
40
B7
N.C.
(E)
1/2


You mess with her you'll see a man get mean An' she's my sweet little thing
She's my
A7
43
pride and joy
She's my sweet little baby
I'm
N.C.
(E)
47
(B7)
her little lover boy
That's right
(A7)
(E)
E
B7/F♯
50
E Guitar Solo
E7
E9
E7add2
53
A7
N.C.
(E7)
56

59
C9/G
B9/F#
N.C.
(A7)

62
(E)
B7
N.C.
(E)


65
hold bend
1/4
1/4
1/4
1/4
1/4


68
A7
N.C.
(E)


71
B7/F#
N.C.
(A7)
1/4

Yeah
(E)
A
E
B7/F#
74
1/4
F 4th Verses
love my baby she's long and lean
You mess with her you'll see a
N.C.
(E)
76
man get mean an' she's my sweet little thing
(A)
A7
79
She's my pride and joy
She's my
N.C.
(E)
81
sweet little baby I'm her little lover boy
(B7)
(A)
(E)
84

G 5th Verse
Yeah I love my baby my heart and soul
N.C.
(E)
B7/F♯
87
1/2
Love like ours a-won't a-never never never grow old
90
A7
She's my pride and joy She's my
N.C.
(E)
93
1/4
sweet little baby I'm her little lover boy
B7♯9
B7
N.C.
(A7)
(E6/9)
(E7)
(E°)
(A6/E)
96
(E)
E♭7♯9
E7♯9
99

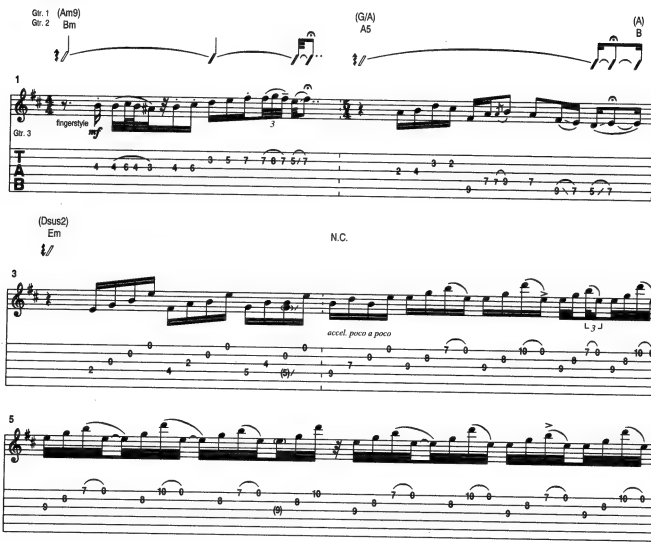
# "Hotel California"

**WORDS AND MUSIC BY DON HENLEY, GLENN FREY AND DON FELDER** **TRANSCRIBED BY JEFF PERRIN**

Gtr. 1 chords (played w/capo behind 2nd fret)

Gtr. 2 chords

**Gtr. 1: (Glenn Frey) 12-string acous. played with capo behind 2nd fret (chords shown in parentheses)**
**Gtrs. 2 & 3: (Joe Walsh and Don Felder) 6-string (nylon) acous. (fingerpicked)**

**A Prelude**
**Free Time**

**As heard on the The Eagles' Geffen recording *Hell Freezes Over***

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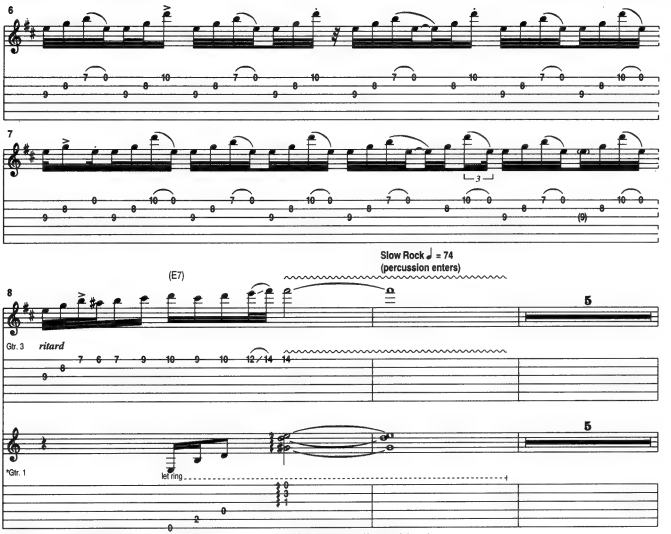
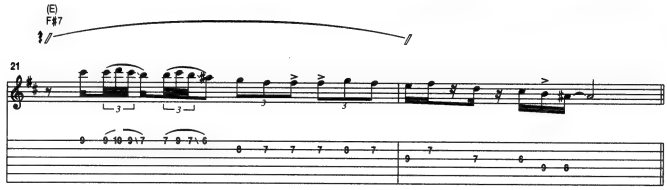
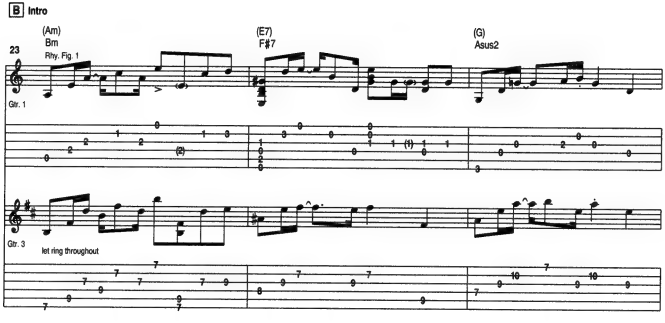
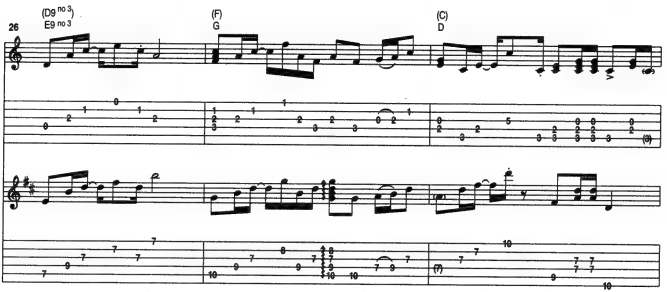
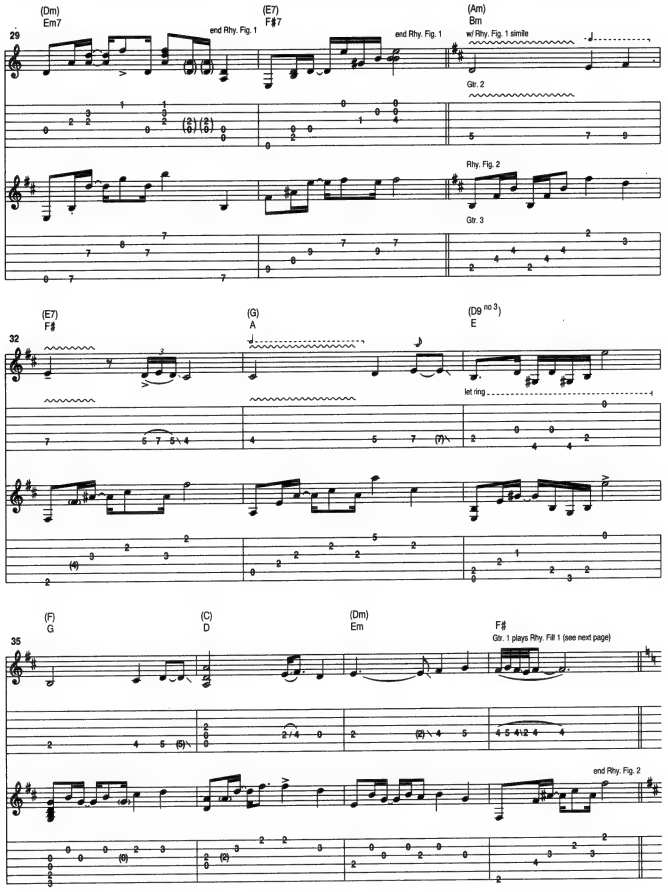

6
7
Slow Rock ♩ = 74
(percussion enters)
(E7)
8
Gtr. 3
ritard
*Gtr. 1
let ring
* Played w/capo behind 2nd fret. All pitches sound one whole step higher than written (key of Bm). All tablature positions are relative to the capo.
Gtr. 3 (Asus2)
Bm
Gtr. 2
(G/A)
A
15
Gtr. 3
(Dsus2)
Em
18

(E)
F#7
21

B Intro
(Am)
Bm
Rhy. Fig. 1
(E7)
F#7
(G)
Asus2
23
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 3
let ring throughout

(D9 no 3)
E9 no 3
(F)
G
(C)
D
26

(Dm)
Em7
(E7)
F♯7
(Am)
Bm
29
end Rhy. Fig. 1
end Rhy. Fig. 1
w/ Rhy. Fig. 1 simile
Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 2
Gtr. 3
(E7)
F♯
(G)
A
(D9 no 3)
E
32
let ring
(F)
G
(C)
D
(Dm)
Em
F♯
35
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see next page)
end Rhy. Fig. 2

C 1st Verse

On a dark desert highway cool wind in my hair warm smell of colitas

39 (Am) Bm (E7) F♯ (G5) A

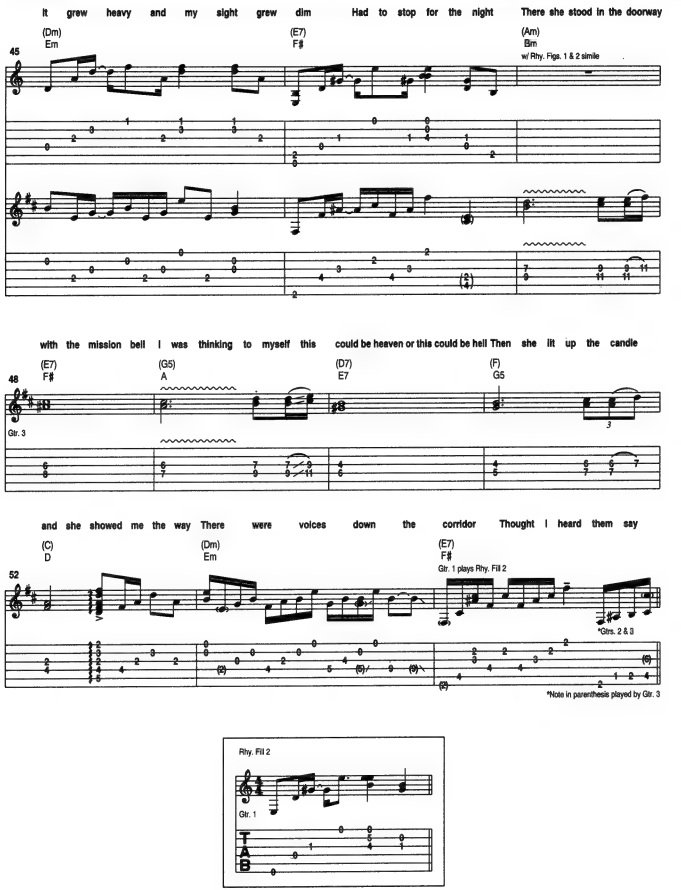
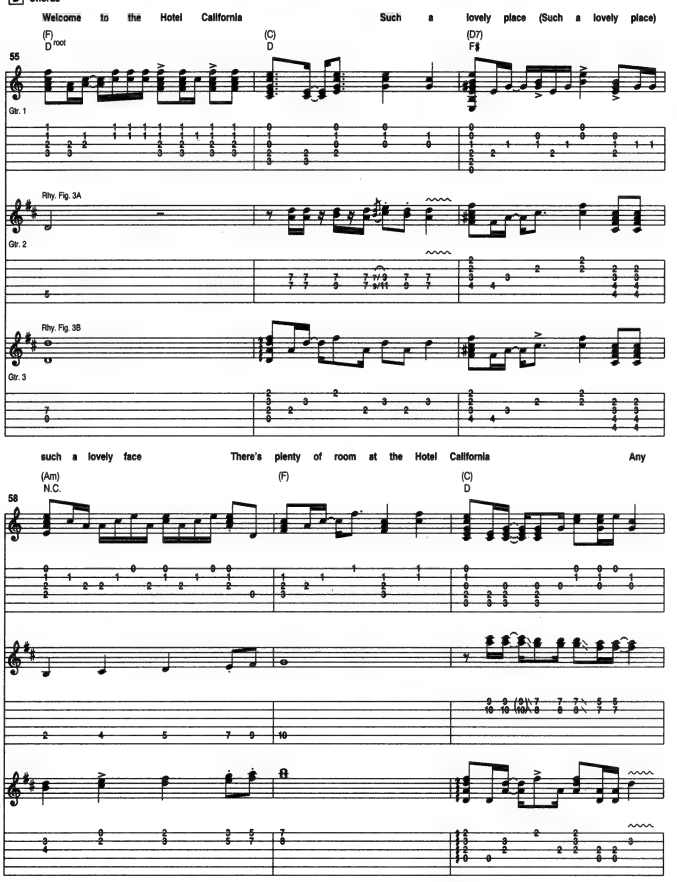
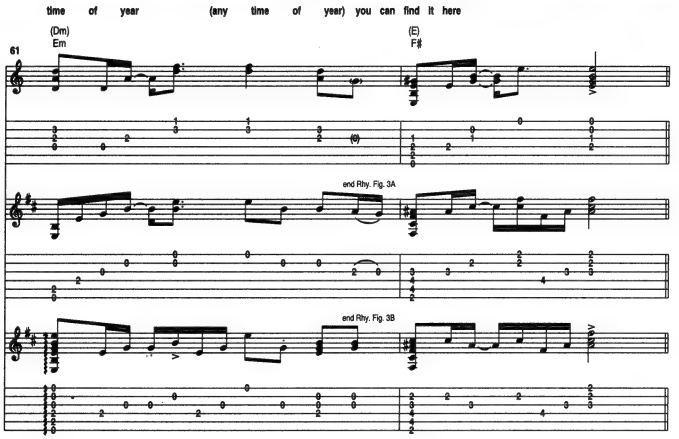
Gtr. 1

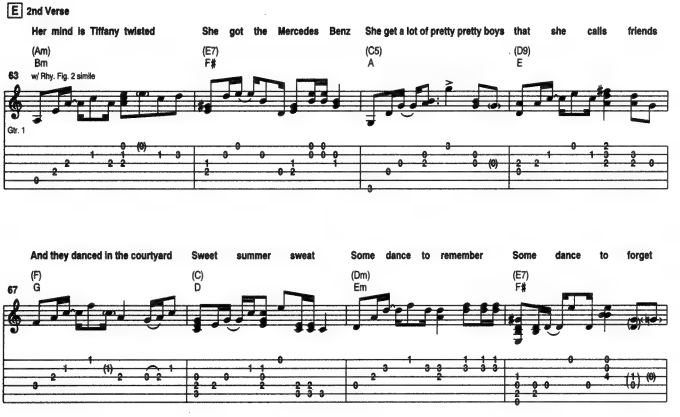
Gtr. 3

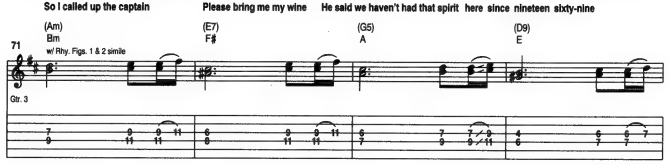
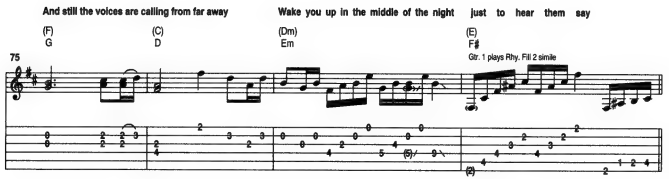
rising up through the air Up ahead in the distance I saw a shimmering light

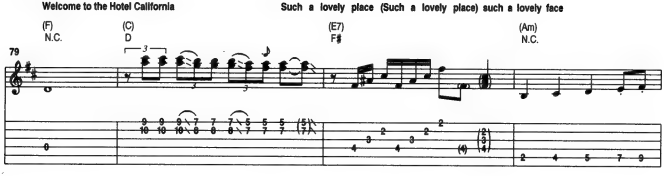
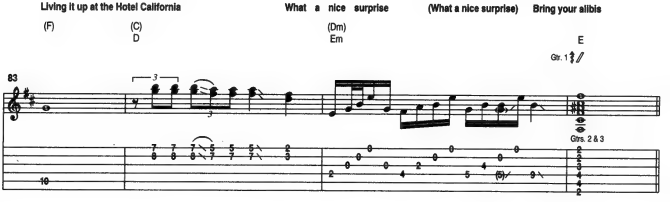
42 (D7) E (F) G5 (C) D

Rhy. Fill 1

Gtr. 1

It grew heavy and my sight grew dim Had to stop for the night There she stood in the doorway
(Dm)
Em
(E7)
F♯
(Am)
Bm
45
w/ Rhy. Figs. 1 & 2 simile
with the mission bell I was thinking to myself this could be heaven or this could be hell Then she lit up the candle
(E7)
F♯
(G5)
A
(D7)
E7
(F)
G5
48
Gtr. 3
and she showed me the way There were voices down the corridor Thought I heard them say
(C)
D
(Dm)
Em
(E7)
F♯
52
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 2
*Gtrs. 2 & 3
*Note in parenthesis played by Gtr. 3
Rhy. Fill 2
Gtr. 1

D Chorus
Welcome to the Hotel California
Such a lovely place (Such a lovely place)
(F) D root
(C) D
(D7) F♯
55
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 3A
Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 3B
Gtr. 3
such a lovely face
There's plenty of room at the Hotel California
Any
(Am) N.C.
(F)
(C) D
58

time of year (any time of year) you can find it here
(Dm)
Em
(E)
F♯
61
end Rhy. Fig. 3A
end Rhy. Fig. 3B


E 2nd Verse
Her mind is Tiffany twisted
She got the Mercedes Benz
She get a lot of pretty pretty boys that she calls friends
(Am)
Bm
(E7)
F♯
(C5)
A
(D9)
E
63
w/ Rhy. Fig. 2 simile
Gtr. 1
And they danced in the courtyard
Sweet summer sweat
Some dance to remember
Some dance to forget
(F)
G
(C)
D
(Dm)
Em
(E7)
F♯
67


So I called up the captain
Please bring me my wine
He said we haven't had that spirit here since nineteen sixty-nine
(Am)
Bm
(E7)
F♯
(G5)
A
(D9)
E
71
w/ Rhy. Figs. 1 & 2 simile
Gtr. 3

And still the voices are calling from far away
Wake you up in the middle of the night
just to hear them say
(F)
G
(C)
D
(Dm)
Em
(E)
F♯
75
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 2 simile

F Chorus

Welcome to the Hotel California
Such a lovely place (Such a lovely place) such a lovely face
(F)
N.C.
(C)
D
(E7)
F♯
(Am)
N.C.
79

Living it up at the Hotel California
What a nice surprise
(What a nice surprise)
Bring your alibis
(F)
(C)
D
(Dm)
Em
E
Gtr. 1
83
Gtrs. 2 & 3

G 3rd Verse

Mirrors on the ceiling Pink champagne on ice And she said we are all just prisoners here of our own device

(Am) (E7) (G5) (Dsus2)
87 Bm F♯7 A E7

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 3

And in their master's chambers they gather for the feast They stab it with their steely knives but they just can't kill the beast

(F) (C) (Dm) (E)
91 G D Em7 F♯7

* fret note in parenthesis w/ thumb

Last thing I remember I was running for the door I had to find the passage back to the place I was before

(Am) (E7) (G5) (Dsus2)
Bm F♯7 A E7
95 w/ Rhy. Figs. 1 & 2 simile

Gtr. 3

Relax said the night man We are programmed to receive You can check out anytime you like but you can never leave

(F) G (C) D (Dm) Em7 E

Gtr. 1 Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fill 3

99

Gtr. 3

**H** Joe Walsh's Solo

(Am) Bm (E7) F#7 (G5) A

103

w/ Rhy. Figs. 1 & 2, simile

Gtr. 2

(Dsus2) E7 (F) G (C)

106

N.H. (8va)

N.H.

fret noise

(Dm) Em7 (E) F#7

109

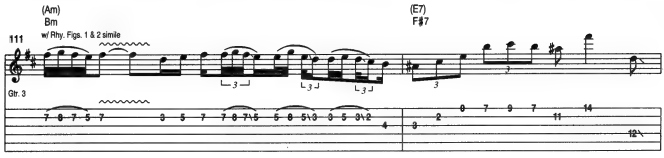
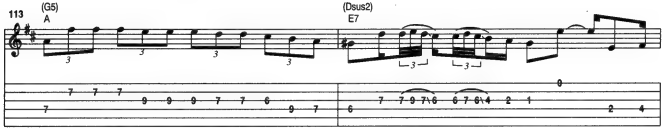
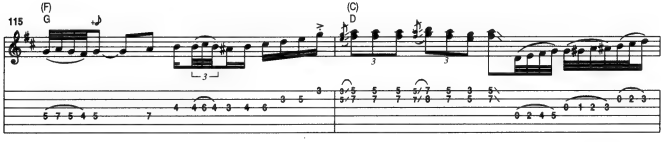
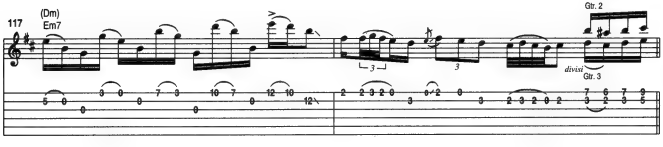
Gtr. 2

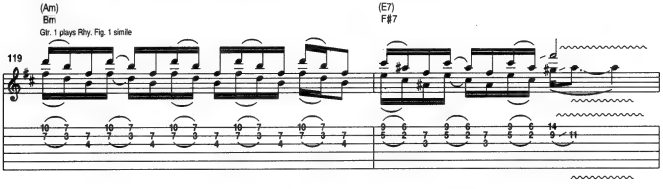
Gtr. 3

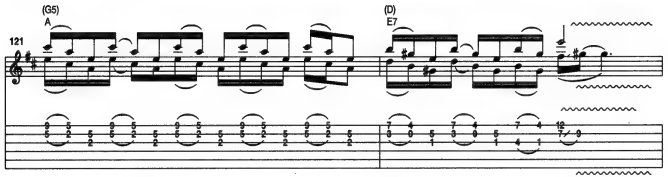
let ring

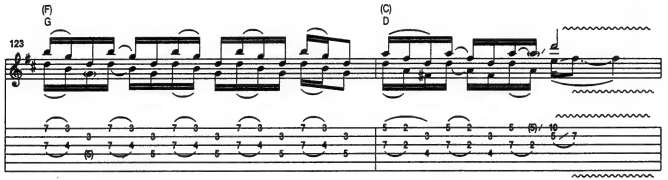
Rhy. Fill 3

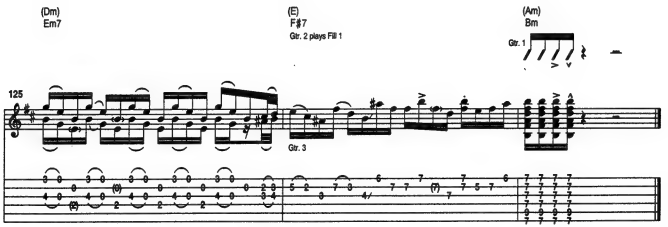
Gtr. 2

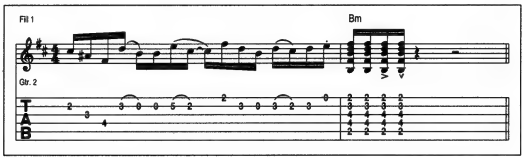
**I** **Don Felder's Solo**

**J** **Outro Theme**




(G5)
A
(D)
E7
121

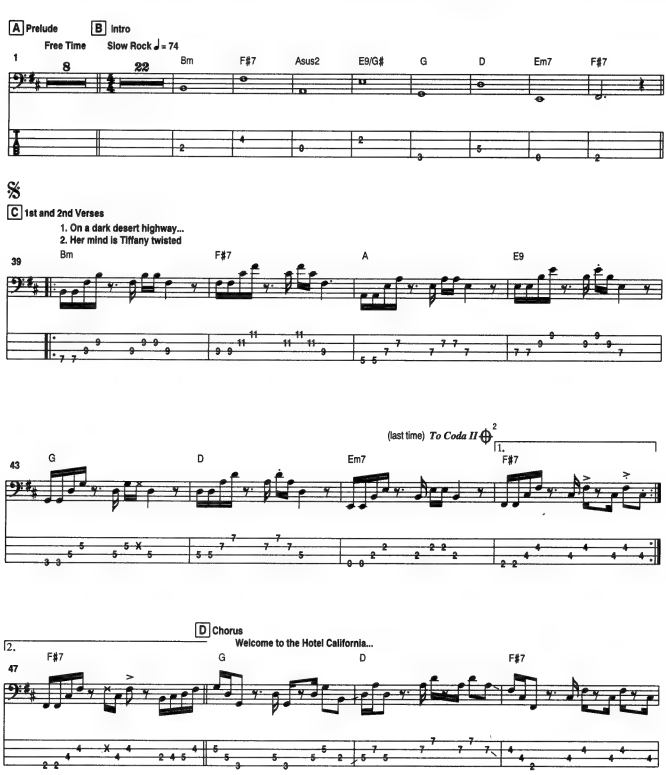

(F)
G
(C)
D
123


(Dm)
Em7
(E)
F#7
Gtr. 2 plays Fill 1
(Am)
Bm
Gtr. 1
125
Gtr. 3


Fill 1
Bm
Gtr. 2
T
A
B

# "Hotel California" (bassline)

WORDS AND MUSIC BY DON HENLEY, GLENN FREY AND DON FELDER

TRANSCRIBED BY ANDY ALEDORT

**As heard on the The Eagles' Geffen recording *Hell Freezes Over***

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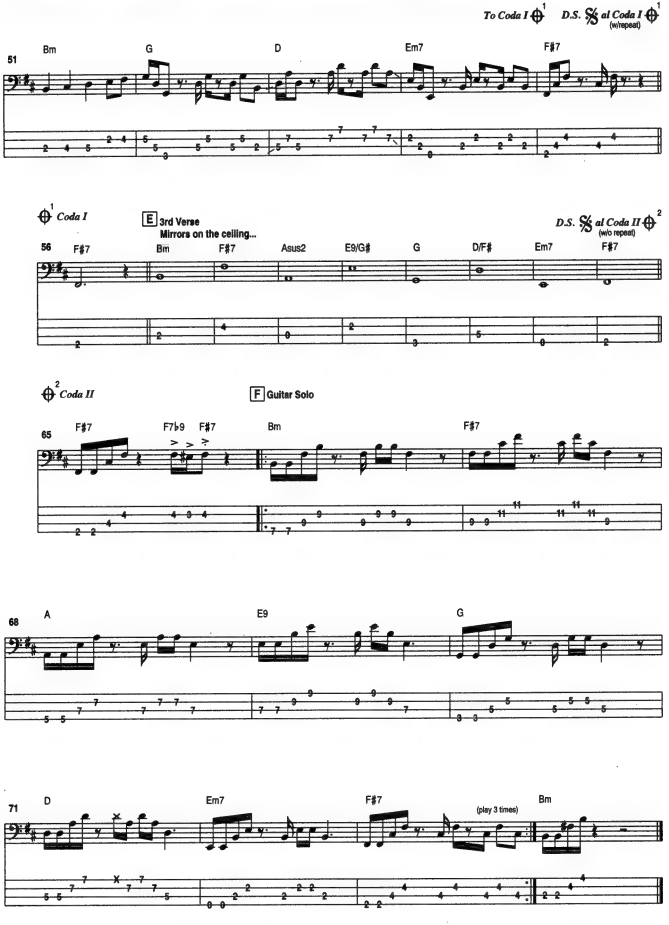
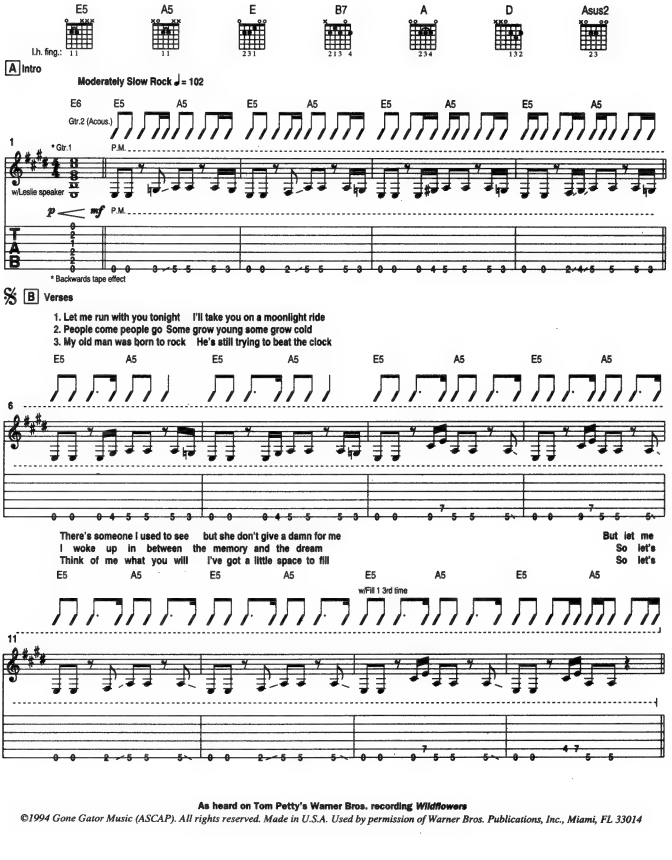

To Coda I
D.S. al Coda I (w/repeat)
51
Bm
G
D
Em7
F♯7
Coda I
E 3rd Verse
Mirrors on the ceiling...
D.S. al Coda II (w/o repeat)
56
F♯7
Bm
F♯7
Asus2
E9/G♯
G
D/F♯
Em7
F♯7
Coda II
F Guitar Solo
65
F♯7
F7♭9
F♯7
Bm
F♯7
68
A
E9
G
71
D
Em7
F♯7
(play 3 times)
Bm

# "You Don't Know How It Feels"

**WORDS AND MUSIC BY TOM PETTY** **TRANSCRIBED BY KENN CHIPKIN**

E5 A5 E B7 A D Asus2
l.h. fing.: 11 11 231 213 4 234 132 23
A Intro
Moderately Slow Rock ♩= 102
E6 E5 A5 E5 A5 E5 A5 E5 A5
Gtr.2 (Accous.)
1
* Gtr.1
P.M.
w/Leslie speaker
p mf P.M.
T A B
* Backwards tape effect
B Verses
1. Let me run with you tonight I'll take you on a moonlight ride
2. People come people go Some grow young some grow cold
3. My old man was born to rock He's still trying to beat the clock
6
There's someone I used to see but she don't give a damn for me
I woke up in between the memory and the dream
Think of me what you will I've got a little space to fill
But let me
So let's
So let's
w/Fill 1 3rd time
11

**As heard on Tom Petty's Warner Bros. recording *Wildflowers***

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**C** Pre-chorus

(3rd time) *To Coda*

(1.) get to the point Let's roll another joint And turn the radio loud I'm too alone to be proud And
(2., 3.) get to the point Let's roll another joint And let's head on down the road There's somewhere I gotta go And

E B7 E A E B7 E A

14

**D** 1st and 2nd Choruses

You don't know how it feels You don't know how it feels to be me

E D Asus2 E D Asus2 E D A

18

Rhy. Fig.1

w/Leslie

**E** Interlude

1. 2.

E D A E D A N.C. (E) A/C♯ N.C. (E) A/C♯

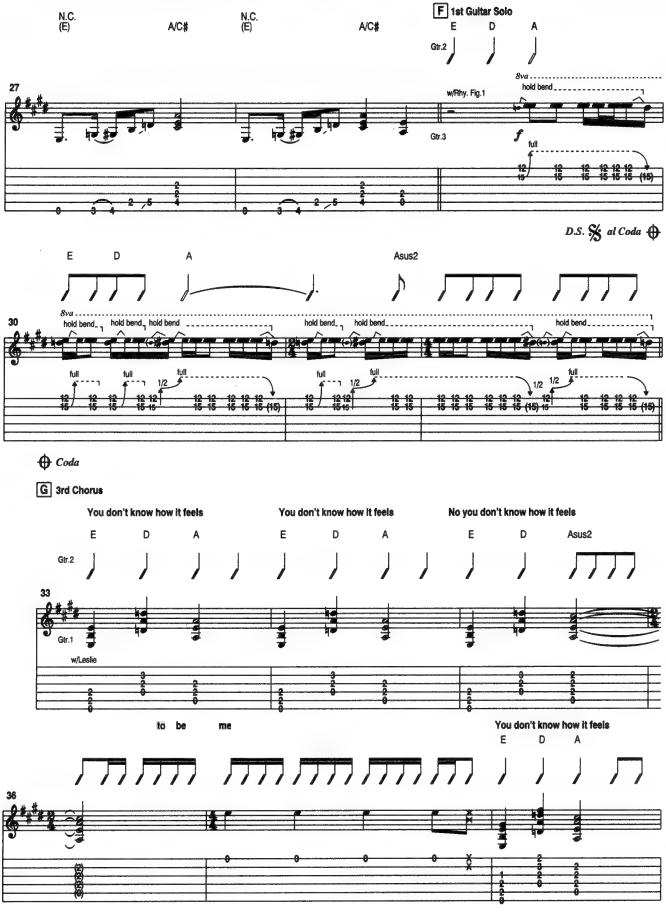
23

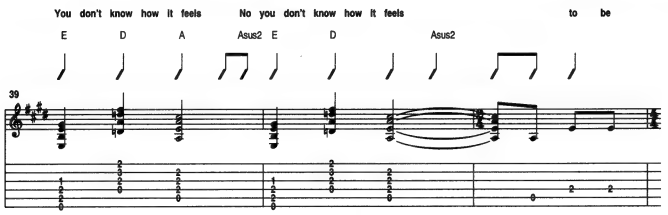
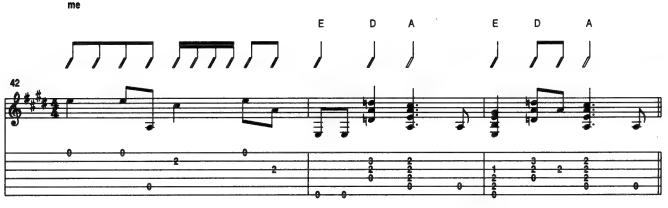
end Rhy. Fig.1

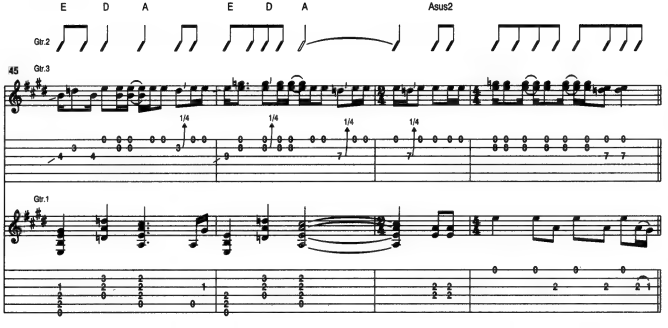
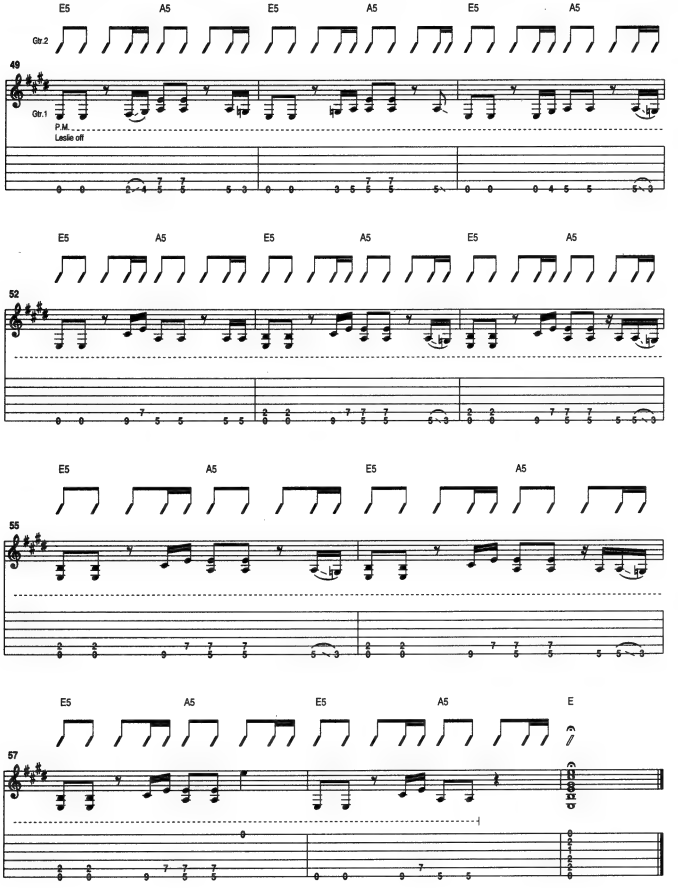
Gtrs.1 and 2

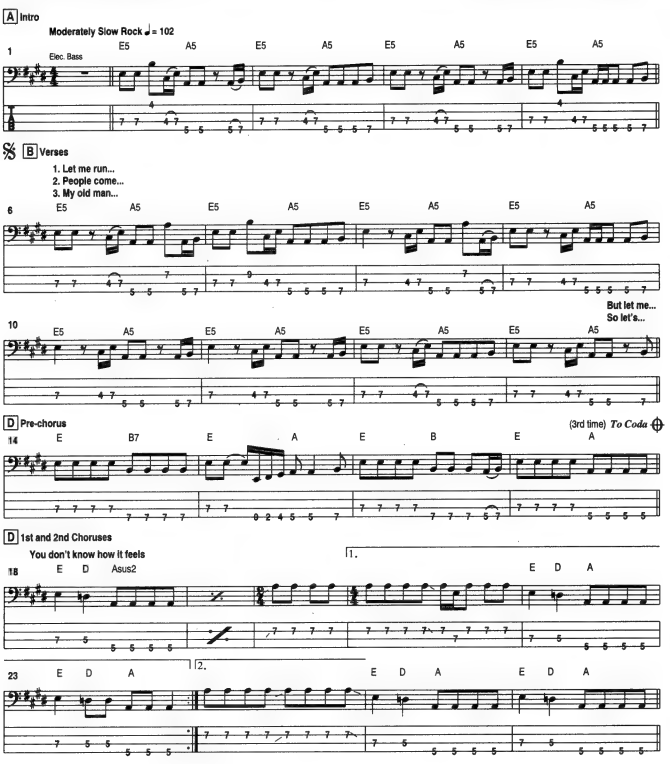
Fill 1

Gtr.3

w/Leslie

N.C. (E)
A/C♯
N.C. (E)
A/C♯
F 1st Guitar Solo
E D A
Gtr.2
27
8va
hold bend
w/Fhy. Fig.1
Gtr.3
full
D.S. 𝄋 al Coda
E D A
Asus2
30
8va
hold bend
full
1/2
Coda
G 3rd Chorus
You don't know how it feels
You don't know how it feels
No you don't know how it feels
E D A
E D A
E D Asus2
Gtr.2
33
Gtr.1
w/Leslie
to be me
You don't know how it feels
E D A
36



H 2nd Guitar Solo

**I** Outro

# "You Don't Know How It Feels" (bassline)

**WORDS AND MUSIC BY TOM PETTY** **TRANSCRIBED BY KENN CHIPKIN**

**As heard on Tom Petty's Warner Bros. recording *Wildflowers***

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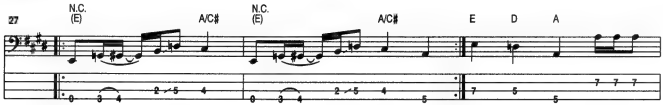
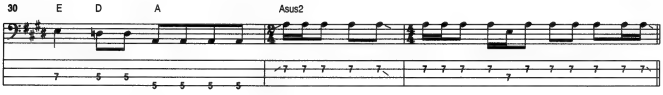
**E** **Interlude** (see meas. 25 in the gtr. trans.)

**F** **1st Guitar Solo** (see meas. 29 in the gtr. trans.)

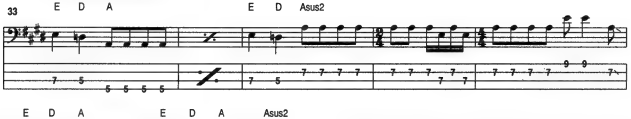
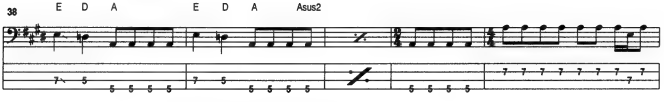



*D.S.* 𝄋 *al Coda* ⊕




⊕ *Coda*

**G** **3rd Chorus**

You don't know how it feels...

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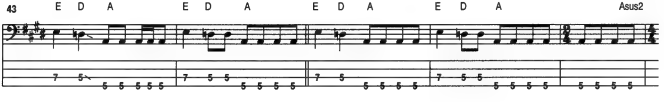
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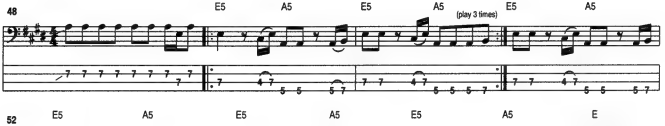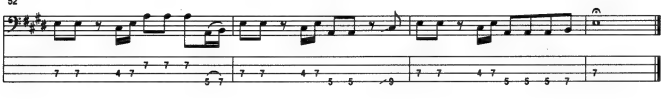
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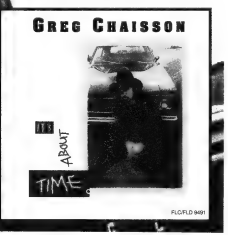


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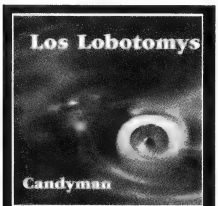


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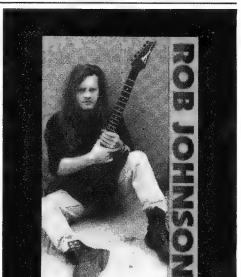


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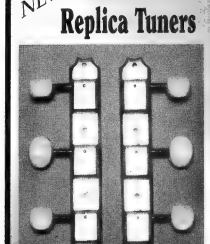

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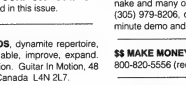
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# IN GEAR

# THE LOST ART OF TUBE TASTING

## Inquisitive experimentation reveals that all tubes are not created equal.

Okay gang, today we're going to start off with a dissertation from this month's teacher's pet, David of Cuba, Missouri, who writes to share some observations he made about the various types of 6L6 output tubes on the market. As you loyal "In Gear" readers know, I'm a big fan of experimentation and electro-prospecting. So, without further delay I present David.

"I play bass and repair tube amps as a hobby. Several weeks ago, an Ampeg VT-60 started making weird sounds at a gig. Later, after some minor repairs (coupling caps & resistors), I took the opportunity to try out several sets of different tubes in the amp. This amp has an easily adjustable bias supply and I was therefore able to quickly change from one set of tubes to the next. The types I tried were: Russian 5881, Chinese 6L6 and the Russian 6L6.

"I could not believe the difference in sound and power output between the different tubes. The Russian 5881 sounded solid and pretty nice, both clean and cranked, and the amp had lots of output. While the sound compared with old Sylvania 6L6's, it isn't *quite* the same. As for the Chinese tubes, the amp just loved them. They sounded warmer when clean and great when I turned them up. The tone was a lot better than what I got from the Russian 6L6, which I tried next—what a dog!

"I called my friend Ron, who plays blues through a '62 Fender Tremolux. This amp sounds good with the Russian tubes in it, but that evening we tried a set of the Chinese and it *kills*. I think we lost a little output level, but the tone really sweetened up and seems just about perfect for blues and old rock.

"I'm not sure how long the Chinese tubes will hold together in a high voltage amp like the Ampeg, but in an old Fender like Ron's they should last awhile."

Well, there you have it folks, David's tube tour of the east. Anyone else?

**I recently purchased a Crate VC5310 Vintage Amp. I run my Les Paul through an Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer straight into the amp. When I switch my distortion on, with or without the TS9, I pick up various radio stations. I have no objections to the radio play selections (everything from Zep to the 1812 Overture) yet it severely affects the mood of a ballad when (with my volume knob down) Black Sabbath's "Paranoid" cuts through. What's the problem, and can it be fixed? Or did I just accidentally stumble upon a mysterious early prototype of "The Crate Radio Amp?"**
**—Shannon, Indiana, PA.**

Okay, Shannon, from one smart-ass to another, here's what I think: The clue here is that you still get the RFI (radio frequency interference) with the guitar's volume down. This tells me that you probably have some type of ground problem in your *guitar*—not the amp. To check this, plug a cable into the amp's input and touch the tip on the other end to a grounded metal surface. Now turn the amp up. All you should hear is hiss and preamp noise.

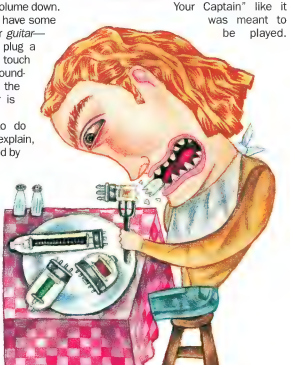
In a misguided attempt to do something that no one can explain, Gibson, back when it was owned by the Norlin Company, removed the normal string ground and replaced it with a grounded metal can. Remove your guitar's control cover, and if you see an aluminum cover, you have this junk and need to have it removed and replaced with a proper grounding circuit. If you have access to an Ohm meter, check between the output jack nut and the strings; you should get an =0 Ω2 reading. If this reads okay, you need to have the rest of the grounds checked for continuity. A string ground must be installed by a competent repair-person.

**I just read your "Tubes Of Extinction" column (Nov '94), and I have a question. I have a Fender Champ which uses 6V6's. I read that Groove Tubes doesn't sell 6V6's because they can't get any that meet their standards. What do you recommend to owners of 6V6 amps?—David, Newbury Park, CA.**

Of all us gasping tube-asauroses, the 6V6 guys have it the worst; new 6V6's just plain stink. Any of the mail-order guys I mentioned in that earlier column will have NOS 6V6's. Give 'em a call and get some RCA's, GE's or Sylvanias. They will run you in the neighborhood of $10.00 to $25.00 each, depending on whether they're matched. This will be money well spent.

**I got a hold of a West Avalon amp with two missing power tubes. I can't find a schematic that will tell me the type of tubes it takes.**
**—John, Deford, MI.**

Cool amp, John—all you need is a Messenger guitar and you can play "I'm Your Captain" like it was meant to be played.



BY RITCHIE FLIEGLER

West Amplifiers were the preferred choice of that great American leviathan of party rock, Grand Funk Railroad. I called all my usual sources, and while no one could give me a definite answer (memory, the first thing to go) they all said probably 6550's. A good tech could verify this by looking inside the amp. If any of you out there know for sure, drop me a line and I'll pass it on. ●

*Ritchie Fliegler's new book,* The Complete Guide To Guitar And Amp Maintenance *(Hal Leonard) is now in music and bookisstores everywhere. Send your questions to Ritchie at PO Box 2101, Port Washington, NY 11050.*

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# DREAD NOT!

**Guitar World's guide to buying an acoustic guitar without fear or anxiety.**

BY ALAN di PERNA

While its guitar-style ancestors have existed since times immemorial—serenading fine ladies, helping monarchs, merchants and monks get crazy after work—the six-string guitar as we know it was born in the late eighteenth century. Despite its long heritage, it remains a modern instrument, as up-to-date as this week's installment of MTV's "Unplugged."

Because the acoustic guitar's been around for so long, interested parties have had plenty of time to work the bugs out of the thing. What a novelty! These days we're used to plunking down hundreds, even thousands, of dollars for things we know will be obsolete or worn out in a few years: personal computers, digital effects units, cars, calculators, wristwatches. A good acoustic guitar, on the other hand, actually gets better with age, as the wood's cellular structure settles in and matures. Compared to the venerable acoustic, the electric guitar's a mere puppy: a paltry 50 years old and still in the early, faddish stages of its evolution. As experienced electric guitarists know all too well, the road to the pawnshop is paved with brass hardware, outmoded wang bar systems and embarrassing paint jobs.

All of this means that a prospective acoustic guitar buyer must approach his task with a different kind of mindset than most major music gear purchases. You're not shopping for features, but for materials and craftsmanship—the kinds of things that will enable the instrument's tone to improve over the years. An acoustic guitar is a sonic investment as well as a financial one. Choose well and it will last you a lifetime.

### NARROWING THE FIELD

Like human beings, acoustic guitars come in an abundant variety of shapes, sizes and personalities. Nylon-string guitars are generally for guys in tuxedos: classical guitarists, flamenco players and Eric Clapton doing "Tears In Heaven" at the Grammys. Just about everyone else uses steel-string acoustics, which are much louder and brighter-sounding. The world of steel-string acoustic guitars is divided into two kingdoms. There are the archtop style guitars, with twin f-holes on either side of the strings. And there are the flattop style guitars, with a big circular soundhole centrally located right beneath the strings. The vintage guitar boom has created a bit of an archtop resurgence, but flattops are still the main event.

Kim Tonelli/Guitars courtesy of Matt Umanov Guitars, Bleecker St., New York, NY

Probably the most popular body style for flattops is the "dreadnought" shape first introduced by Martin in 1931. It's a boxy but elegant shape, with a wide waist and narrow shoulders. The dreadnought was named after a battleship, and was designed to come on stronger, louder and deeper than the traditional acoustic guitar body of the time. The traditional guitar body shape is more curvaceous than the dreadnought—narrow-waisted, with rounded bouts. Traditional bodies come in many sizes, but the most popular seems to be the big, *zaftig* jumbo body, patterned after the Gibson J-200.

Guitarists who primarily want an acoustic they can play in a band alongside a drum kit and electric instruments should consider buying an electro-acoustic guitar. Some traditionalists refuse to regard these hybrid creatures as "real" acoustic guitars. For regular watchers of "Headbangers Ball" there isn't any other kind of acoustic. It's only the most recent angle of a question which has puzzled philosophers down through the ages: What is the true essence of an acoustic guitar? If Plato were a metal guy and Socrates a grizzled old folkie, the dialogue might go like this:

**PLATO:** Dudes, check out this acoustic guitar I just bought!

**SOCRATES:** I hate to disillusion you, kid, but that thing you're holding is an electric guitar. What else do you call a guitar with a pickup on it? Semantics, man; semantics.

**PLATO:** Aw, gimme a break. It's hollow and it's got a big hole in the middle, doesn't it?

**SOCRATES:** Yeah, and another hole cut in the side for a battery compartment. And another hole for the tone controls...You really think that surgically mutilated monstrosity is going to resonate like my prewar Martin D-45? You think it's gonna have anything near the same subtlety, mellowness and tonal nuances?

**PLATO:** I'll tell you one thing, it ain't gonna feedback up on stage when me and the boys are doin' our new power ballad. Bring that antique of yours up there and they'd have to put a mic on it. Feedback inferno, dude. Besides, if you put any acoustic guitar through a P.A. system, half of your precious "tonal nuances" are history anyway.

# BASEMENT TAPES

**SOCRATES:** Well, that's what you get for playing with a rock band and going electric. Dylan never should've done it, man. And while we're at it, don't you know that stupid cutaway on your guitar reduces the cubic volume of the body? If you ever do unplug that thing, it's not going to project like a real acoustic, or speak as deeply. A cutaway! Did Robert Johnson need a cutaway?

**PLATO:** No, but Randy Rhoads did!

**SOCRATES:** Well, I'm sorry. I just can't look on that thing as a real acoustic guitar. It's too ugly!

**PLATO:** Ugly? I paid an extra 200 bucks to have Miss October painted on there!

That last remark brings up the all-important topic. No, not Miss October. Money. How much should you have to pay for a good acoustic guitar? Anything under $500 or $600 is generally considered entry-level: Careful shopping will get you a good beginner's guitar, a fine little beach buddy, but not much else. The mid-price range stretches from about $500 to $1,500. Here's where you get into good, professional, working musician's guitars. The $1,500-plus zone is where the real beauties dwell: new and vintage rarities with heart-melting tone.

What's the real difference between a $500 acoustic and a $2,000 acoustic? To answer this question, you have to learn a little bit about wood. It's good to know some woodlore anyway if you're shopping for an acoustic—it'll help you identify prime materials and aid you in detecting signs of warpage, improper handling and other ills that can afflict even brand-new, high-end guitars. So let's look at the acoustic guitar, one piece at a time. We'll concentrate mainly on flattop guitars, since they're the most common. The basic principles delineated below apply to electro-acoustics as well as acoustic acoustics. They are the stuff that knowledgeable guitar purchases are made of.

### YOU'RE THE TOPS

The body of a flattop acoustic guitar consists of three elements: the top, the sides and the back. Of these three, the top is by far the most important. It's the part that's in direct contact with the bridge, and is the direct recipient of the strings' vibration. It is therefore the single most important contributor to the tone of the guitar. Like a speaker cone or Mariah Carey's larynx: it's the part that sings.

The best guitar tops are made of solid wood of which spruce is the most popular type. It is pretty easy to identify: light in color, but not quite as "pale" as maple. Sitka and Engelmann are the prestige varieties of spruce. Guitar tops can also be made with good results out of cedar, pine and koa. No matter what the top is made of, take time to examine the wood grain. The grain lines should be perfectly straight and tightly spaced, running along the entire length of the top. Most guitar tops are made of two solid pieces of wood: the left half and the right half. These two halves should match perfectly—they should look like one piece of wood. This is called "book matching." Like the guys in Nelson.

Have we said that the best guitar tops are made of solid wood? Let's say it again, because it's a crucial point when it comes to tone. Cheaper guitars have laminated tops—plywood, in essence—layers and layers of cheap wood with a paper-thin veneer of spruce or some other prestigious-looking stuff on the outer surface. This shabby slice of termite lasagna will never resonate as uniformly or musically as solid wood. That's why cheaper guitars generally have plenty of high end but no warmth or bassy depths.

Warning: in a noisy music store, this superficial brilliance can be impressive, simply because it helps make the guitar audible over the general din of the place. When flogging a cheap acoustic, store personnel are likely to say things like, "Oh man, this one really cuts!" This quality may be admirable in hedge-trimmers, but when shopping for an acoustic guitar, seek out a soundproof booth and listen carefully to the bass and mid-range response of the instrument as well as the highs.

Solid wood tops are one big feature that distinguishes the under-$500 acoustics from the over-$500 models. To tell the difference, examine the perimeter of the soundhole. Remember those wood grains we mentioned earlier? They should continue all the way down through the wood: strong, straight vertical lines, if you've got the guitar laid flat and you're peering into it sidewise. If you see concentric horizontal rings, the top is a laminate. Warning: soundholes are sometimes beveled, painted or otherwise tarted up to conceal the tell-tale Saturn rings of lamination.

What else to look for? Obviously, there shouldn't be any cracks. And the top of any flattop guitar should be just that: perfectly flat. It shouldn't look like the floor of a low-rent tenement apartment. So be sure to examine the top for lumps, bumps, unevenness or buckling—especially around the bridge area. It could mean that pressure from the bridge is pulling the top up off the guitar—a definite no-no. While you're at it, make sure the bridge is firmly glued to the top. The best test is to get a business card or sheet of paper and try to slip it between the bridge and the top. If it slides in, that bridge could be destined to take a long journey by air in the very near future.

On to the back and sides. If the top of an acoustic guitar is like a speaker cone, the back and sides are like a speaker cabinet. They add depth and bassy "oomph," helping the top to "speak." Maple, rosewood and mahogany are the most popular woods used for the back and sides. You might also encounter nato, a kind of affordable stand-in for mahogany. Blonde and brilliant, maple is the brightest sounding of these woods. Mahogany is the most mellow. Highly prized, rosewood offers a golden mean somewhere between maple and mahogany. Solid wood beats laminate for the back and sides as well as the top.

The back of an acoustic guitar is slightly arched, to help project the sound up through the soundhole and keep it from getting "stuck in the corners" inside the body. Taking this principle to its ultimate conclusion, some acoustics have completely rounded backs like an old Renaissance lute. The pioneer of the "roundback" design among steel string acoustics is Ovation. Beyond that, they also repositioned the soundholes and challenged the whole idea that you need wood to build an acoustic guitar, opting instead for a space age material called Lyracord for the guitar's back and sides.

### BRACE YOURSELF FOR THIS

Okay, once you've decided that the external surface of the body checks out, it's time to take a close peek inside the soundhole. The most important thing to examine here is the bracing. Underneath the top, acoustic guitars have a system of wood braces to support the top and keep it from being pulled up off the sides. Good bracing is one of those under-the-hood refinements that separate the Porsches from the Hyundais on the byways of acoustic guitardom. The bracing has to be strong enough to provide adequate support, but not so fat and flunky that it inhibits the way the top resonates. The bracing on a lot of acoustics is based on the cross-bracing (or X-bracing) system developed by Martin during the nineteenth century. Cross-bracing employs two main braces that run diagonally underneath the top, criss-crossing somewhere between the bridge and soundhole. Additional braces supplement this big central cross as needed. Makers of classical guitars generally use a system called fan bracing, with wooden braces extending out from a central hub like bicycle spokes. Cross, fan, or otherwise, the bracing on better acoustic guitars is generally scalloped. This means that pieces of the wood have been shaved away to make them lighter and therefore more resonant, while maintaining structural integrity.

The main thing to check for is that the bracing hasn't cracked and that it isn't coming loose—which produces a lot of pesky rattling noises. You can reach inside the soundhole and feel around a little to make sure the bracing is firmly attached to the top. (This is easier if the strings are removed.) But it's also good to peer inside the soundhole and make a visual inspection. A flashlight and a dental mirror will assist greatly in this process. Some guitar shops even sell goose-necked flashlight-plus-mirror gadgets specially designed for probing the innards of acoustic guitars.

While you're down there, take a general look around to make sure everything is in

good shape. You can check out the back bracing (if any) and the kerfing: the back of the zipper-like slotted wood strips that hold the back and top onto the sides. The inside of an acoustic guitar is a wonderful place to explore. You might discover a crack that isn't visible on the surface. You might find the date the guitar was made stamped on the neck block or elsewhere. The model number might be in there too—all of which can help you make sure that you're really buying what you think you are. Also, a "clean" interior—free of gloppy glue droppings, tool marks, etc.—is a hallmark of good craftsmanship.

### NECK EXERCISES

Along with the top, the neck demands the most intensive examination when checking out an acoustic guitar. The neck materials and craftsmanship contribute to both the tone and playability of the guitar. Mahogany and maple are the most popular woods for acoustic guitar necks. Maple has a brighter tone, but is a bit more liable to warp than mahogany. So most maple necks are made of two separate pieces, with a strip of mahogany between them, which makes for great stability.

Rosewood and ebony are the most common fingerboard materials. Ebony is harder than rosewood and therefore brighter in tone, but also a little more prone to crack. Ebony is darker in color than rosewood. Some cheap acoustics have rosewood necks painted black to look like ebony. But they can't fake the texture: rosewood is visibly more open-grained and porous.

A warped neck is the single greatest evil to beware. There are two basic tests for warpage. One is the time-honored little jig where you tuck the guitar under your chin like a violin and look down the neck. "Sighting down the neck," as it's called, will enable you to see any lateral warpage that exists: i.e., if a portion of the neck has wrenched itself further away from the low E string than it is from the high E. You should also be able to see if the frets are all straight and uniform and whether or not they have any nicks.

There's another test for the most common form of warpage: the kind where the whole neck "bows away" from the strings to an excessive degree around the region of the 7th fret. This makes the guitar hard to play and contributes to faulty intonation. Conversely, some necks bow too much toward the strings around the 7th fret region, which makes for fret buzz. To detect either type of warpage, you can use the low E string as a straight-edge ruler. With one hand, press down the low E string at the first fret. With the other hand, simultaneously press down the same string at the fret where the neck joins the body. (This will be the 14th fret on all but very ancient acoustics.) The neck surface should run pretty much parallel to the depressed string. A very slight concave bow (i.e., away from the string) is the ideal condition. It helps fight fret buzz without compromising intonation or playability.

On virtually all acoustics, the neck is attached to the body via a dovetail joint and permanently glued in place. Therefore the way the neck is set is crucial to the guitar's action (how high or low the strings are off the fretboard). General playing up and down the neck will tell you if the action is right for you. flattop acoustic guitars don't have adjustable bridges like electrics, but if the action is too high, some of the bridge saddle can be shaved away to lower it. Just make sure that there's enough of a bridge saddle to be shaved away. If it's already down to a nub, the action is as low as it's going to get. Conversely, low action can be raised by putting in a new bridge saddle. But if you're buying a new guitar, you shouldn't really have to worry about replacing parts.

The way the neck is set also affects the guitar's intonation. Neck warpage and bridge positioning are the other vital factors. And since acoustic guitars don't have adjustable bridges, these factors are *very* vital. Most guitarists learn how to check the intonation of an instrument pretty early in life: on each string, you play a harmonic at the 12th fret and then actually play the note at the same fret. If the pitch of the fretted note is higher or lower than the harmonic, the intonation is off.

Also look at the heel of the neck: that wooden block of wood that extends down from the base of the neck and joins with the body. If there is any gap between the neck heel and the body, or if the finish looks cracked, bubbled or milky-colored at the joint, then the neck may have shifted—indicating a faulty neck joint and trouble down the road.

A few more small details and we're through. Check the nut: that slotted piece up by the headstock. Make sure it isn't cracked and that the nut slots are uniformly spaced, all of the same depth and clean in general. And don't forget the tuning gears. They should turn freely, be unrusted and firmly attached to the headstock. The best kind are the enclosed, self-lubricating ones with no visible gears.

Master all these details and you'll pass undaunted through the noisome maze of music stores, tacky sales pitches and questionable bargains. Knowledge is power. But the ultimate decision rests with your ears. All these objective tests are in vain if the guitar's tone doesn't whisper to you: "buy me, buy me, buy me...." ●

Kim Tonelli/Guitars courtesy of Matt Umanov Guitars, Bleecker St., New York, NY

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SOUNDCHECK

# TELE-MARKETING

## Four Tele-style guitars inspected for your twangin' pleasure.

The Telecaster, introduced as the Broadcaster in 1950, was Leo Fender's first six-stringed creation. Unlike so many other mass-produced products which explode into the public awareness and just as forcefully fade into obsolescence, the Tele and its visionary design have shown incredible staying power. Like another of Leo's brainchildren, the Stratocaster, and Gibson's equally stately Les Paul, the Telecaster is a rock and roll survivor.

Telecasters were the first solidbody electrics to develop a cult following. The likes of Albert Lee, James Burton, Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck have helped elevate this most simply appointed of all electric guitars to its present exalted status. And rightfully so; the Telecaster's unique sonority and feel inspire breathtaking licks that are difficult or impossible to replicate on any other instrument.

In the retro-minded Nineties, Tele-style guitars of every ilk seem more popular than ever. For our roundup, we chose four guitars that do not deviate excessively from Leo Fender's original blueprint—all have passive electronics, three-way switches, master volume and tone knobs, string-through-the-body design and bolt-on necks. Three of the four are equipped with single-coil pickups. But far from being mere imitations, these four guitars update the original in some important and practical ways: thankfully, the bridges are equipped with six-string saddles (the three-saddle design made proper intonation a virtual impossibility), and all the necks sport 22 frets, one more than tradition warrants.

For our tests, we ran the guitars unscientifically through an assortment of amps that were floating around our studio—clean through a Fender Pro Reverb, hard-driving a Mesa/Boogie DC-5, powering a number of rack units and even directly into a Harrison console through the studio's Summit mic preamp. We tested the guitars in the real world of several recording sessions in order to see how quickly we could stop evaluating and start *enjoying* them.

BY E. D. MENASCHÉ

### HAMER T-51 ($949)

Hamer's entry into the Tele-style sweepstakes manages to offer satisfying twang with plenty of vintage flavor, even while capitalizing on the distinctively modern traits for which the Illinois-based company is known—a sleek, flat neck and excellent workmanship.

T-51 bodies are constructed of two pieces of 1.750-inch-thick swamp ash, a nicely grained tone wood that's relatively dense and is known for its snappy tonal response. The bolt-on, one-piece maple neck joins the body at the 16th fret. In traditional style, the frets are mounted directly on the neck (there's no separate fingerboard). The neck is 1.680 inches wide at the nut and the truss rod adjusts at the headstock. Speaking of headstocks, the Hamer's sports an unusual shape that might take a little getting used to.

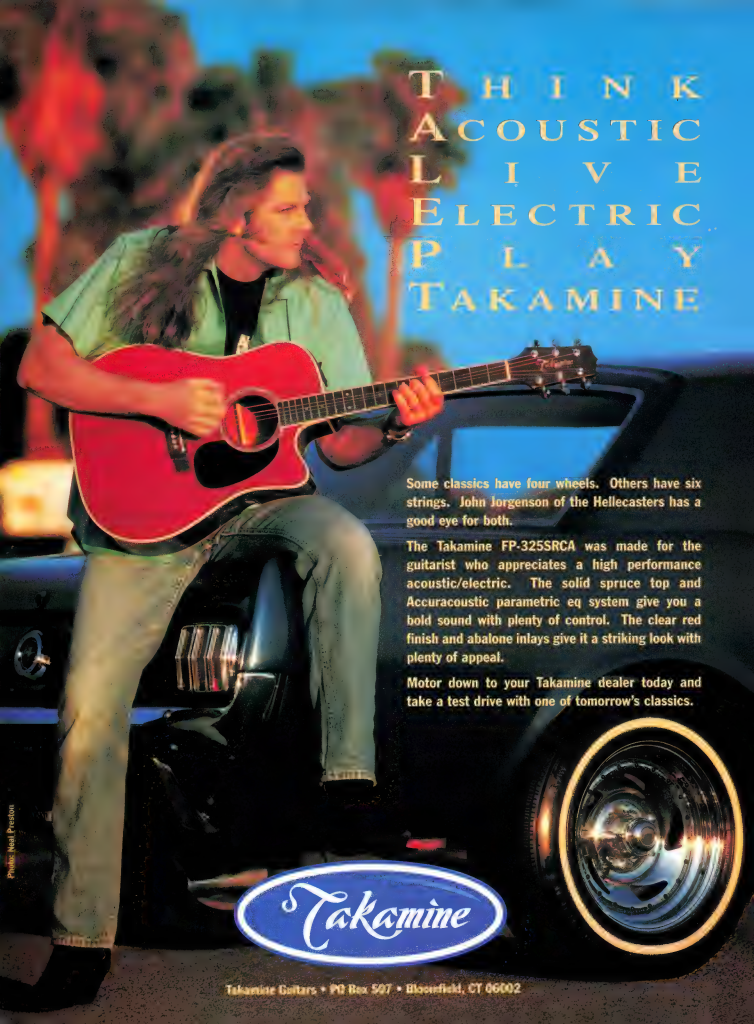
Sperzel locking tuners and a stick synthetic lubritrack nut contribute to the T-51's impressive tuning stability. The Wilkinson HT100T non-tremolo bridge offers an interesting combination of traditional Telecaster design and modern tuning stability. The saddles can be adjusted via one surface-mounted screw, making set-up and intonation less frustrating. Strings pass through the body. The bridge also follows form by extending up the body far enough to surround the lead pickup, another important contributor to "authentic" Tele-style twang.

At nearly nine pounds, the T-51 feels a touch on the heavy side, though it's still a pretty comfortable guitar to hold for long stretches. Workmanship is excellent and the unusual, almost ghost-like, gray of the tester's transparent finish made the guitar something of a conversation piece during its stay at the studio. Hamers rightfully enjoy a reputation for superior solidity and reliability.

The flat, 14.5-inch fingerboard radius and

From left: Peavey Reactor, Hamer T-51, Fender American Standard Telecaster

Lorinda Sullivan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specially designed frets help project the T-51's distinctive Hamer personality. I particularly like the frets, which are a perfect hybrid of jumbo and standard sizes. They're taller than standard, thinner than jumbo and very comfortable to run around on. The fretboard radius could be especially appealing to rockers who've grown up on the flat stuff, but shouldn't be ignored by traditionalists who might find it necessitates an adjustment: there's plenty of room to bend the strings, and you never seem to fret a note out.

The T-51's acoustic tone is vibrant and complex. Sustain is impressive. Played finger-style or with a pick, the Hamer snaps off notes with intense presence, even unplugged, though the guitar never sounds strident or thin. And that's the key to a good Tele-style tone—it has to twang, it has to have high-end, but it shouldn't be thin or brittle sounding.

Plugged in, the Hamer's warm twang is still abundantly present, thanks to the perfectly matched and balanced Seymour Duncan pickups: a Vintage Broadcaster in the bridge and a covered Vintage '54 in the neck. Clean, the T-51 jangled crisply and sounded especially good when I played multi-string bends. It also drove the DC-5 and the rack units to smooth, rich overdrive that boasted a subtle response curve. Pushing heavy distortion is not this guitar's forte—its subtle response gets lost and the fuzzy personality of the distortion takes over.

The T-51's pots and switches have the silky smooth response of high quality components. Rolling back the tone control can accomplish several tasks effectively—it can smooth out high-end response or, especially when used with the neck pickup, get a voluptuously smooth, jazzy tone.

### G&L ASAT STANDARD ($975.00)

Hand-crafted and beautifully appointed, the G&L ASAT offers both electronic and hardware updates to the tried-and-true Telecaster theme, while maintaining a decidedly vintage playing surface. The test guitar felt broken in right out of the box.

The ASAT's body is made from ash. The maple neck, unique in this group in that it is held in place by only three bolts, meets the body around the 16th fret. A close look at the neck reveals something else interesting: it's made of two pieces of maple, glued together lengthwise down a long and texturally imperceptible seam. G&L calls this design "Bi-Cut" construction and claims it eliminates unwanted stress and weak points in the maple while improving the integrity of the truss rod. The test model's neck certainly had no dead spots, and the G&L's acoustic responsiveness was breathtaking.

With its round, very vintage fretboard radius (7,5-inches) and almost "V"-shaped cut, the ASAT's neck is a quick-picker's dream. The more I played this guitar, the lighter my touch became and the less energy I had to put into achieving solid, dynamic tone. I have a well-worn Fender Strat with a three-bolt joint, which I've always regarded as a major weakness of that guitar, but the G & L's three-bolt design is stable and helps the ASAT achieve its excellent sustain. There is a tilt adjustment for optimizing string action, which was flawless on the test model. Like the Hamer, the G&L begs you to bend its strings.

The fretwork had surprisingly jagged edges for a guitar of the G & L's caliber and price point. The setting of the nut also seemed a little sloppy. In all fairness, however, these deficiencies bothered me much more when I studied the guitar, far less when I played it.

The tuners are non-locking Sperzels. These work very well, but I've come to prefer the locking units even on non-tremolo guitars like the G & L. The bridge's design is unusual for a Tele-style guitar in that it does not surround the lead pickup. It sports an interesting and unusual feature called "Saddle Lock": a set screw pushes the bridge saddles together, which stabilizes them against extraneous vibration and is supposed to improve sustain. As noted earlier, the G & L has *great* sustain.

The ASAT's Magnetic Field pickups were designed by Leo Fender . The pickups have adjustable pole pieces for greater user control over response and also boast a fairly high output—especially for single coils, though they're not nearly as loud as the humbuckers found on the Peavey reviewed below. Pushing a clean Fender amplifier, the G & L had tons of twang. Both pickups provided a high enough output on their own to excite the compressor stage of our rack system, helping us create a snappy, "in your face" clean sound. Used in tandem, the pickups provided a vibrant, almost scooped jangle. The G & L's neck pickup has a very different and, to my ears, broader tone than a traditional Tele neck unit. Unlike those vintage-style units, however, its adjustable height allows it to be set in such a way as to not overpower the lead pickup. The volume and tone controls worked cleanly and smoothly.

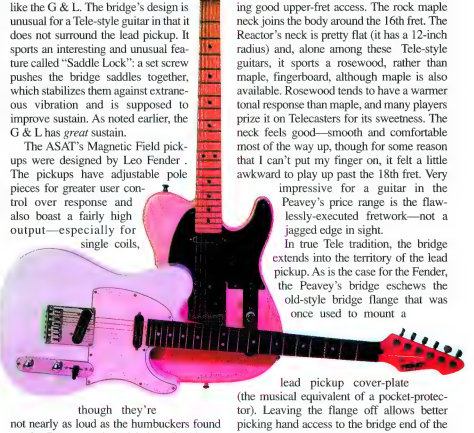
With a richly textured sunburst finish and tastefully appointed headstock, the G & L makes for elegant gazing. But as nice as it looks on a stand, this is a player's guitar. It's very comfortable to hold, weighs little and is well-balanced. Most importantly, it rewards good chops and a subtle touch by providing excellent, complex tone. This guitar is much more than the sum of its admittedly impressive parts.

### PEAVEY REACTOR AX ($500)

Whether as a Telecaster for Generation X, or simply as a price-leader, the Peavey Reactor AX does a nice job of walking that dangerous line between price and performance.

The Peavey's body is made of alder, although blonde and sunburst AXs are made of swamp ash. It has a deep cutaway, allowing good upper-fret access. The rock maple neck joins the body around the 16th fret. The Reactor's neck is pretty flat (it has a 12-inch radius) and, alone among these Tele-style guitars, it sports a rosewood, rather than maple, fingerboard, although maple is also available. Rosewood tends to have a warmer tonal response than maple, and many players prize it on Telecasters for its sweetness. The neck feels good—smooth and comfortable most of the way up, though for some reason that I can't put my finger on, it felt a little awkward to play up past the 18th fret. Very impressive for a guitar in the Peavey's price range is the flawlessly-executed fretwork—not a jagged edge in sight.

In true Tele tradition, the bridge extends into the territory of the lead pickup. As is the case for the Fender, the Peavey's bridge eschews the old-style bridge flange that was once used to mount a lead pickup cover-plate (the musical equivalent of a pocket-protector). Leaving the flange off allows better picking hand access to the bridge end of the strings, important for that stone tone you get with a pick near the saddle and extremely helpful as an aid to picking hand damping and muting. The saddles are "Strat"-style, and are adjustable for height with an Allen wrench and for intonation from that traditionally awful angle with a dreaded Phillips-head screwdriver. The truss rod adjustment is at the headstock. There is also a neck tilt adjustment to help you optimize string



Lorinda Sullivan

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height, and Peavey recommends using this before playing with the bridge.

The neck on our tester was stable and true, its action nice and low and relatively buzzless—traits that render the Peavey's humble price even more impressive. For a guitar with non-locking tuners, the Peavey stayed in tune well. The nut is made of a black synthetic that seems to allow reasonably free string movement.

Acoustically, the Reactor offers good balance and tonal response. Although not quite as impressive in these areas as the more expensive guitars we tested, it was surely good enough to get many a job done. The main difference: unplugged, the Peavey seems to emphasize midrange frequencies at the expense of low-end punch. On the flip-side, the top end is smooth and sweet.

Plugged in, the Peavey's high-output, dual-blade humbuckers add further distinction to the guitar's tone. Again, there's more midrange emphasis to go along with the hotter signal. The Peavey sounds good clean—quite twangy with both pickups engaged—yet it seems to love to play dirty. It matched well with the DC-5 and, because it's humbucker equipped, had a better time of it with the high-gain rack systems into which we fed it. The neck pickup balanced the lead unit well, meaning it's much hotter than a traditional Tele unit and does a nice job on overdriven blues solos.

The finish of the test model reminded me of a vintage car's—cool toothpaste aqua with a marbled white pickguard. For an economically-priced production guitar, the workmanship is very impressive, indeed. It's a good workhorse for a budget-minded player or even for a pro who needs an extra ax around.

### FENDER AMERICAN STANDARD TELECASTER ($879.99)

It would be foolish to conduct a round-up of Tele-style guitars without including a genuine Fender Telecaster, especially since the American Standard version of the instrument does such a good job of updating the traditional Fender design while retaining the overall flavor and vibe of the original.

The body is made of alder or poplar, two woods known for their similarly even response and tone. The neck on the tester was maple, with the frets laid directly on top. (A rosewood fretboard is available as an option.) The neck attaches with four bolts, and there is a tilt adjustment at the back of the mounting plate. The neck joins the body at the 16th fret. The American Standard version of the Telecaster has 22 frets—one more than the original.

The fretboard's 9.5-inch radius and relative narrowness accounts for a feel that is directly between the extreme roundness of the G & L and the extreme flatness of the Hamer. Like both, the Fender likes it when you bend the strings around, and if it's not quite as slick as either of those other guitars, the American Standard is plenty satisfying to grab hold of. This is an easy instrument to feel comfortable playing. The action is very good and basically buzz-free—you really have to whack the low E-string for it to lose its composure.

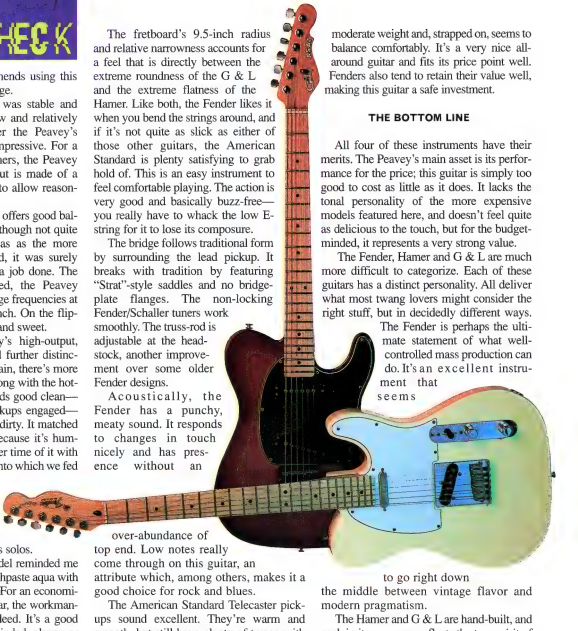
The bridge follows traditional form by surrounding the lead pickup. It breaks with tradition by featuring "Strat"-style saddles and no bridge-plate flanges. The non-locking Fender/Schaller tuners work smoothly. The truss-rod is adjustable at the headstock, another improvement over some older Fender designs.

Acoustically, the Fender has a punchy, meaty sound. It responds to changes in touch nicely and has presence without an over-abundance of top end. Low notes really come through on this guitar, an attribute which, among others, makes it a good choice for rock and blues.

The American Standard Telecaster pickups sound excellent. They're warm and smooth, but still have plenty of twang with just a touch of pedal-steel sweetness. The Fender has moderate output. In our tests, the pickups complemented the guitar's natural acoustic tone very well, especially when driving the Mesa/Boogie to smooth distortion.

Though outwardly similar in design, both pickups have a different personality from the "vintage" Seymour Duncans found on the Hamer. Like those excellent units, however, the Fenders seem to suit the personality of the guitar they live in perfectly. The tone knob is a special passive design called TBX, which has a center, "flat" point and acts on different frequencies depending on which direction you turn it from center position. I found it effective, but liked its response turned to full treble.

The workmanship on this off-the-shelf production guitar was very impressive. The fretwork was smooth and the finish clean. Our test model came in an almost blonde hue, deceptively labeled by the Fender color-guide as Arctic white. The American Standard has a moderate weight and, strapped on, seems to balance comfortably. It's a very nice all-around guitar and fits its price point well. Fenders also tend to retain their value well, making this guitar a safe investment.



#### THE BOTTOM LINE

All four of these instruments have their merits. The Peavey's main asset is its performance for the price; this guitar is simply too good to cost as little as it does. It lacks the tonal personality of the more expensive models featured here, and doesn't feel quite as delicious to the touch, but for the budget-minded, it represents a very strong value.

The Fender, Hamer and G & L are much more difficult to categorize. Each of these guitars has a distinct personality. All deliver what most twang lovers might consider the right stuff, but in decidedly different ways. The Fender is perhaps the ultimate statement of what well-controlled mass production can do. It's an excellent instrument that seems to go right down the middle between vintage flavor and modern pragmatism.

The Hamer and G & L are hand-built, and each in its own way reflects the true spirit of the custom shop by going out on conceptual limbs. The profiles of these two necks are polar opposites, and your radius preference—flat or curved—may instantly determine your choice. ●

#### MANUFACTURER'S ADDRESSES

Fender Musical Instruments Corp: 7975 North Hayden Rd. Scottsdale AZ. 85258 (602) 596-9690

G & L Musical Products: 5500 Bolsa Ave., Suite 245 Huntington Beach, CA. 92649 (714) 897-6766

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Lorinda Sullivan

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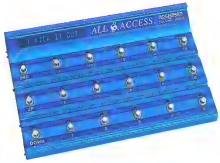

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*Rocktron 2870 Technology Drive Rochester Hills, MI 48309. (810) 853-3055.*

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Aria introduces the Fullerton series of guitars. Suggested list prices range from $259 to $1299.

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## AMPEG B2-48

The Ampeg B2-48 is a new version of the B-2, a 200 watt, single 15-inch bass combo. The B2-48 differs from its predecessor through the use of four polypropylene coned 8-inch drivers and a high frequency domed tweeter. It retains the tone control of the B-2: 20dB pad, low, mid, high, 9 band graphic eq, line level control, effects send/return, preamp out, power amp in, and XLR balanced line out.

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## NUNO BETTENCOURT

*continued from page 98*

from day one. People have asked me why I haven't done an instructional video. Well, it's because everyone's spoon fed. There's a library of good music out there—just go home and listen to some records and develop your own interpretation out of it and develop your own thing.

**GW:** How do you keep on top of your playing and improve your technique?

**BETTENCOURT:** You never look to improve. You look to adapt your playing to what your mind is thinking. The only way to improve is to make sure that what you're playing is connected to how you're feeling. You get better at expressing yourself directly. Technically, I don't know if I'm getting worse or getting better. I just know I'm getting closer to saying what I want to say in the proper language.

**GW:** What would you advise up-and-coming players to do?

**BETTENCOURT:** I don't know anymore. I feel like I'm almost talking to an audience that isn't listening right now, that's almost ready to worship the guitar player who *isn't* playing right now. The biggest goal is just being yourself and expressing yourself properly. And that ain't gonna happen in one or two or three or four years. That's just gonna happen by doing it. And if people think they can listen to me or Kurt Cobain, or whoever they're worshipping now, and be that in a matter of six months just from buying some video or reading some tablature—forget it. It's all about putting time in and thinking about it.

**GW:** Do you think people want to think? Or do you think they just want to give up and say it's too hard to think, it takes too much effort ?

**BETTENCOURT:** It's funny, 'cause lyrically, the current scene has some of the most thought-out stuff you've ever heard. But they're not thinking musically, and I think that's a lot of the appeal of what's happening right now. I mean, what do you think when you go see a crowd now and they're basically moshing and stage diving? Do you think anybody's really paying attention to what's going on, or to whether the band was really great that night? They just want to feel the vibe—it's a bit tribal. And I'm not saying that's bad or good; it's just where people are at right now. It's like background music for them to exert themselves over.

But bands like Extreme get criticized for being polished because we love to play live and do good performances and we put time into it. I recently heard on this new Nirvana videotape that there's a quote about us, something to the effect of, "Whatever Extreme represents, we would hate to be like that."

If these guys were so concerned about being what Extreme isn't, they wouldn't make fucking videos—they wouldn't have anything to do with MTV period! Let alone perform *Unplugged* because they were asked to. I just couldn't see Nirvana performing on *Unplugged*, but they did. And I just want to say to all of them—welcome. Welcome to the big machine, 'cause you're all a part of it. You can all cry and say you're all very underground and say you're all rebellious against the whole thing, but I think you're just as much part of the establishment as we are.

**GW:** So is your only choice between being a fretboard wizard or a guy who claims he doesn't practice and doesn't care? What happened to the middle ground?

**BETTENCOURT:** That's the thing. I've always tried to keep that middle ground myself. I meet some guitar payers now who so intensely want to know every thing you're doing—where the knobs are set and everything, and I honestly just recorded this album with this Vibroverb amp. It has no distortion, so I put everything up to 10, and it sounded really cool so we just recorded it. Now that sounds like I'm trying to be really cool, like *I* don't care.

But I do care about my playing. And that comes back to getting a performance down. I wouldn't leave something in a recording that was really, really bad. But there are little things that aren't perfect that you can leave in, and sacrifice perfection if the vibe is okay. It's the vibe that's important, that comes across. I'm not too concerned with telling everybody how it's done. I've had people get mad at me because they ask me what delay setting I use on this tune or that, and they think that I really know and that I just don't want to tell them. And I honestly don't even fucking remember. I could care less. I mean who gives a shit? Figure it out or it's not a big deal. It was what was created at that moment that matters.

**GW:** But isn't that "offhand" attitude part of the current slacker ethic?

**BETTENCOURT:** No. Because what I'm talking about is the difference between analysis and performance. And a good performance takes effort. That's why I get upset when I read interviews with some bands where they make it sound like they're pretending that they just don't work on anything. Like they just woke up one day, instruments in hand, and played the way they do.

**GW:** Is it cool to work on anything?

**BETTENCOURT:** If you sit down and practice, then you're very unhip right now. Don't even tell anyone you do because they'll laugh at you. It's much cooler to go up and plug in and hit a few chords. This guitar player from a band whose name I won't even mention because I thought it was pretty funny said to me, "I used to be able to play like you"—he called it this "Vai stuff," like I'm really into Vai anyway—"but then I just got tired of it, and I literally taught myself not to play. I got a guitar with real high action so I would never be able to play like that anymore." I mean, give it a rest.

You have to play what you mean, what's in your heart. That's how I usually find bands that I like—I don't care what kind of music you're talking about, if it's alternative, garage, whatever. You can hear the difference between a band that is playing because they love to do it and one that's just chasing success. Back in the Eighties, I made a list of like 50, 60 bands that I knew wouldn't exist in a few years, and I was right. They're all gone. And it's because they weren't doing it for the proper reasons. I guarantee you I could make the same list now. I'm not even talking about successful bands, but bands who'll disappear if they don't succeed, because they don't live their music, they don't breathe it. They don't need it. They're just chasing the wind, following what's happening.

And that's the difference with Extreme. No matter how the music scene changes, we'll still be ourselves. Whether alternative continues to rule, or Green Day makes everything get all punky again, like a rehashed Clash, we'll never be a hip band, we'll never fit on the industry bandwagon. Because we do what we do and we love to do it. We just do Extreme like Extreme does. Nobody can do Extreme like we can, just like we can't do Nirvana. It would have been easy to say, "Let's write some Nirvana-type stuff. Just get close to it and maybe we could fit in." That would have been nice. You know? But that's not what we're doing, it's not what we're about. ●

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*continued from page 68*

'er, went on to produce the *Unplugged In New York* CD.) The band and cellist Lori Goldston were already on stage when Cobain arrived, notably unaccompanied by Courtney. "I think that was planned," says Alex Coletti. "I think he was a little too nervous to have Courtney and the baby there."

For the show, Cobain played a Martin D-18E that he had purchased at Voltage Guitar in Los Angeles during the fall of '93, and which had become his main acoustic. With his characteristic flair for the oddball, the guitarist had picked up a rare misfit. The D-18E, one of Martin's earliest stabs at an electrified guitar, is essentially a D-18 acoustic with two pickups, three control knobs and a selector switch grafted on. Introduced in 1958, it was discontinued in 1959; only 302 were ever produced. The instrument was the perfect acoustic for Cobain, a counterpart to the trashed old Mustangs and Jaguars he favored, not to mention the thrift shop clothes and doll parts he accumulated.

But unlike his beautifully threadbare cardigans, this Cobain cast-off had some real intrinsic value: "I don't believe he had any idea how rare it was before he bought it," says Earnie Bailey. "Kurt was neither a collector nor a connoisseur of rare guitars. I think he saw the D-18E as an oddity, hoping it would sound as good as it looked. Unfortunately, the instrument's DeArmond pickups were designed with nickel strings in mind, so hearing it with bronze-wound strings was pretty disappointing. Our solution was to attach yet another pickup—a Bartolini model 3AV—to the top of the Martin. Kurt first became interested in that pickup when he saw Peter Buck using one and really liked the sound."

While the usual *Unplugged* procedure is for acoustic guitars to run direct, Cobain insisted on putting his Martin through his trusty Fender Twin Reverb amp and his usual array of effects boxes. [*See accompanying story, page 68.*]

"Maybe I shouldn't give this secret away," Alex Coletti says with a laugh, "but I built a fake box out in front of the amp to make it look like a monitor wedge. It was Kurt's security blanket. He was used to hearing this guitar through his Fender. He wanted those effects. You can hear it on 'The Man Who Sold The World.' It's an acoustic guitar, but he's obviously going through an amp. There's no trying to pull the wool over anybody's eyes. I actually fought pretty hard to leave that song out [*of the final edit of the show*], because I felt it wasn't as genuine as the rest of the songs. But I'm a huge Bowie fan, so I couldn't fight too hard against the song."

As a concession to the *Unplugged* aesthetic, Earnie Bailey did modify the amp

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"The information I received was worth more to me than most of the instruction I had received up to that point. Everyone who plays must know about this." *J.T., guitar*

"It's like hearing in a whole new dimension." *L.S., guitar*

"I'm able to play things I hear in my head a lot faster than ever before. Before I started the course, I could barely do it." *J.W., keyboards*

"After just a few minutes of your instructions, I could locate an F♯by ear—even when it was hidden in a group of several tones!" *G.B., synthesizer*

"You can imagine my joy when I listened to your tapes for the first time, went to the piano, and made the startling discovery of Perfect Pitch! I started crying and laughing all at the same time." *J.S., educator*

"It touches the core of musical perception." *D.S., violin/viola, Los Angeles Philharmonic*

"I began to transcribe Queensryche *Silent Lucidity*. It seemed simple. I forgot about it until I happened to be in a music store and saw a $25 book with the song in it. It was transcribed totally wrong from the way I figured it out.

"Then I picked up the latest *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*. It was exactly the way I transcribed it months ago. Let's say that I grinned like a little kid with candy." *D.O., guitar*

"Mr. Burge has given me the key to what I once considered a closed door." *D.H., Ph.D., voice/piano professor*

"I believe! It works just because it's so simple." *S.P., sax*

"I hear a song on the radio and I know what they're doing without my bass guitar.

"My improvisations have improved. I feel more in control of what I'm doing." *J.F.B., Costa Rica*

"When I heard the first tape I could hear the pitch color differences Mr. Burge described. At first I thought it might be my synthesizer, so I tried other synthesizers. I could still hear the differences.

"Now I listen more carefully to the sounds of the notes and how they blend together. While working on a piece I was writing, all of a sudden I heard the pitch color of each note. I revised the piece immediately. I'm much happier with it now." *W.H.P., synthesizer*

"Perfect Pitch is an invaluable asset in my musical career. I feel if every musician could hear as I do, they would realize how useful it is and how delightful." *H.M., voice*

"It's hard to describe. It's like hearing more of the piece or the different feelings evoked because of the key it's played in.

"I can listen to myself better and hear what I'm doing, allowing me to express myself better.

"It's amazing how easy and simple Perfect Pitch is. After understanding it, it was like the pitches were at the 'tip of my ear.'" *C.L., piano*

"All music listening is improved quite markedly on the level of happiness, as you pointed out on one of the tapes." *S.H., jazz guitar*

"Never again will I listen to music as before. My playing has improved and I am able to easily transcribe note-for-note many Eric Clapton songs I had wanted to for so long." *H.K. guitar*

"The life and breath of feeling part of what we play can be more fully experienced through this knowledge of Perfect Pitch." *D.S., piano*

"Wow! What an amazing thing! It really worked. I couldn't be happier. I started last Halloween and can now distinguish all the notes on my piano. Mr. Burge, I am grateful for what you have given me—I feel like a new musician. Since I am a drummer, I am very proud that I could achieve something of this caliber. I feel as if I have a leg up on those who I will be competing with in college." *J.M., percussion*

"It all boils down to taking the time to listen." *M.B. piano*

"This is absolutely what I have been searching for." *D.F., piano*

"Mr. Burge—you have changed my life!" *T.B. guitar*

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"It's strange how some things that seem so hard are so simple." *D.W., flute*

"I used to sleep in instead of practicing in the morning, but since starting your course I haven't skipped one day. My improvisations have improved." *M.S., piano/synthesizer*

"Perfect Pitch for a musician is more valuable than gold." *E.V. guitar*

"I can't understand why it's remained a secret for so long." *B.T., music student*

"It's so simple it's ridiculous." *M.P., guitar*

"I have already acquired abilities I never dreamed of having 2 years ago, as well as an overall zest for music. You've really made a difference in my life." *M.G., piano, Germany*

"Although I was at first skeptical, I am now awed." *R.H., sax*

"Last Tuesday night in rehearsal I was listening to the soloist play and I recognized E♭ [illegible]

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for the show: "To keep the Twin as clean as possible, I switched the 7025 power tubes to 12AX7's and substituted the 12AT7 phase inverter to a 12AU7. By the time Kurt showed up, everything was pretty much dialed in, right down to listening to the pickup balance from the control room."

It is standard *Unplugged* procedure to videotape the camera rehearsal/soundcheck for each show. Nirvana's *Unplugged* rehearsal tape is packed with revelations. More than anything else, Cobain looks tired. His face reflects that unmistakable road weariness that takes hold of musicians after months and months of dealing with strange places, strange situations and even stranger people. Throughout the rehearsal, Cobain's mood varies from low-keyed bitchiness over technical foul-ups to a kind of deadpan, humorous take on the whole proceeding. He calls the second number of the rehearsal, "About A Girl," to an abrupt halt, demanding, "How many more times is that fuckin' feedback gonna happen when I turn my head to the left?" Later on he calls for Finger-ease to help him smooth out the song's solo: "You know that goofy-ass stuff? It's like anal gel." He later explains that he'd never used the fretboard lubricant before, but that his "country and western aunt" used to do so. He nevertheless knows enough to specify that he wants the roll-on rather than the spray. "God, I'm being picky today," he says with mock self-derision.

The whole band seem mildly amused at receiving the superstar treatment from MTV. "Uh, my candle went out. Can somebody please light it?" Dave Grohl demands at one point with stagey hyper-professionalism. "This fucking sand is ridiculous," Cobain says of the substance in which the candelabra and vases were anchored.

What also comes across unmistakably on the videotape is the extent to which Cobain was in charge of Nirvana. He tells Dave Grohl when he's singing flat and directs him to play louder at several junctures. He directs Pat Smear not to keep changing his amp volume. And although he is known for the punkish nonchalance of his guitar approach, the rehearsal tape shows that Cobain could be quite obsessive about tone and guitar equipment. He enters into a lengthy debate with one technician over the various qualities of his two Electro-Harmonix Echo Flangers. Later he asks about the feasibility of acquiring replacement machine heads for his Martin. "These aren't good machine heads," he sadly observes.

As the rehearsal progresses, the trouble spots in the set soon become obvious. One is the aforementioned "The Man Who Sold The World." Cobain can't seem to get past the first chorus without blowing the chord changes. "Sorry," he tells the others. The band tries the song again and again, but never manages to get all the way through it. In the end they decide to move on.

"What should we do next, Scott?" shouts Cobain into the darkness above his head. Of all the people on the set, Litt is the only one to whom he seems to defer. The band moves on to a flawless performance of "Polly" and get halfway through "Dumb" before a monitor snafu again brings things to a halt. "MTV Poltergeist," Cobain quips. Trouble rears its ugly head once more when they move on to "Pennyroyal Tea." Pat Smear persists in resolving his chorus harmony vocal to a flagrantly wrong note. Again, the band attempts the song repeatedly, with no success. They try it with Grohl playing Smear's guitar so he can concentrate on his harmony. That doesn't work either. The situation grows increasingly tense, before the band again decides to move on without resolving the problem.

"Jesus Doesn't Want Me For A Sunbeam" comes off infinitely better. But Cobain still seems uneasy. He calls out for someone named Amy (perhaps the Amy Finnerty mentioned in the *Unplugged* CD liner notes): "Amy, can you sit in the front when we play?" Cobain asks. "You and Janet and everyone I know? [*Presumably Janet Billig, from Nirvana's management company.*] 'Cause I hate strangers."

The onstage arrival of Cris and Curt Kirkwood, "The Brothers Meat," lightens the mood considerably. Their three numbers go well, and the rehearsal closes with a confident reading of "All Apologies." Nirvana leave the stage having assayed 11 of the 14 songs in their set.

According to Alex MacLeod, the post-soundcheck vibe was fairly tense: "They were still like, 'Oh my God, we haven't rehearsed enough. Oh shit, we're gonna blow this totally.'" After leaving the stage, the band retired to a room upstairs at the Sony facility for a two-hour dinner break. Over the meal, the delicate question of the set list again presented itself. Alex Coletti narrates: "There was this whole subtext of 'try to get Kurt to do more hit songs' that prevailed throughout the day among myself, my boss and management. The other thing was we were really pressuring Scott Litt, like, 'Hey, see if you can get more songs out of them, or better songs.' Again, I'm not saying it was the right thing to do. I think what we got was great. Kurt just chose to take a different road with it. I guess it wasn't the road we were all in synch on. Not that he went in a bad direction at all."

At 8:30 that evening, the audience was "loaded in," as they say at MTV. As it turned out, many of the front row seats were given to New York-area Nirvana fan club members—probably not familiar faces to Cobain, but far from hostile ones. Taping began at nine. Somehow, magically, the rough spots from soundcheck seemed to simply vanish. "I guarantee you I will screw this song up," Cobain nervously announces before starting "The Man Who Sold The World." But he doesn't. The "Pennyroyal Tea" problem resolves itself nicely too. "Am I doing this by myself or what?" Cobain demands. "Do it yourself," Dave Grohl calls out, deftly seizing the moment. This impromptu arrangement decision contributed greatly to the show's informal, intimate vibe. Cobain turns in a memorable performance of a song that was always one of his most affecting statements about his own ailment and discontent.

From here on in, Cobain seems to grow more relaxed and confident. One of the recurring themes of jokes during soundcheck—MTV's "superstar treatment"—winds up working well during the show too. "Aren't we, like, a rich rock band?" Cobain cracks as everyone waits for one of the Meat Puppets' guitars to be brought out. "Shouldn't we have a million guitars?"

Despite the informal, jokey vibe, Coletti recalls that the Nirvana *Unplugged* shoot was remarkably tight and hassle-free. "With most *Unplugged*'s, we tend to run through the set, have a chat and then do a few songs over again. But this was truly one take—every song, straight through, in one hour. We didn't have to change tapes, which is a rarity. Usually we have to stop and put up a second load of audio and video tapes to get the last few songs. But this was really tight—something like 56 minutes from start to finish."

Cobain pulled out all the stops on the final song—a riveting version of "Where Did You Sleep Last Night," a traditional tune recorded by another of his musical heroes, the American folksinging archetype Leadbelly. Having done pained, screaming justice to the death-haunted ballad, Cobain left the stage, never to return.

"I really tried to get him to do an encore," Alex Coletti remembers. "I had Dave, Chris and Pat ready to do it. But Kurt just wasn't into it. I was just doing my job for MTV at that point, trying to get that one extra song in the can, to see if the night could produce one more gem. The pleading went on for about five minutes. Finally Kurt said, 'I can't top that last song.' And when he said that, I backed off. 'Cause I knew he was right." ●

## COBAIN'S CUSTOMS

*continued from page 66*

strings was one of the keys to Kurt's signature sound."

When the instrument was finished, Cobain and his missus, Courtney Love, stopped by Ferrington's shop to collect it. "They had to be the weirdest couple in the world," the luthier says with a laugh. "She's so over the top, and he was so sensitive and soft-spoken and polite. He couldn't have been a nicer young fella. You could tell he was really talented. He'd sit there and play the guitar and

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## COBAIN'S CUSTOMS

he had really beautiful hands, with real long fingers. Chet Atkins has hands like that. Courtney asked him, 'Honey, are you gonna smash that guitar too?' He said, 'Oh no, this is going to be my recording guitar.'"

That was shortly before work began on *In Utero*. Not long after the album was completed, Cobain became involved with the Fender Custom Shop. Once again, Nirvana's management had initially contacted Fender in a desperate search for replacement necks and parts.

"I was able to track down what they needed," says Fender Director of Artist Relations Mark Wittenberg, "so they could keep his guitars up and running. Then we were contacted and told that Kurt had an idea for a guitar—something that he had in his mind's eye but wasn't really seeing out there in the real world. His favorite guitar was a Mustang, but there were things about the lines of the Jaguar that he really liked too."

Wittenberg and Fender master builder Larry L. Brooks journeyed to Cobain and Love's Hollywood apartment to discuss the guitar. The couple were just in the process of moving out. Like Ferrington, the Fender guys were impressed with Cobain's courteous manner.

"He was very soft-spoken and very gentle" Brooks recalls. "As it turned out, we'd gotten him out of bed. He'd been out or played the night before, so he was still a little tired. But as we started talking about the guitar, the adrenaline started flowing. He was very easy to work with. He knew what he wanted, but at the same time he was able to say, 'You're the builder, so you know the best way to accomplish what I'm after.' He was very open minded that way."

To explain what he wanted, Cobain hit on the idea of taking Polaroids of a Mustang and a Jaguar, cutting the photos in half and gluing them together in a way that combined the upper part of the Mustang body with the lower portion of the Jag body. [*see photo, page 66*]The resulting hybrid creature was named the "Jagstang." Brooks blew up the composite picture in an enlarger, traced the body shape and cut out a body that was sent to Cobain. The guitarist suggested some modifications to enhance the body's balance. At one point he also sent Brooks one of his favorite necks to copy. In very short order, a prototype instrument was completed. "It took less time to design and build the guitar than it does just to communicate with some other artists," says Brooks.

The resulting instrument has an alder body, plus a 24-inch scale maple neck with a rosewood fretboard and vintage-style fretwire. At Cobain's request, Brooks used stock Mustang hardware from Japan, where the guitars are still produced. (According to Nirvana guitar tech Earnie Bailey, the bridge was later changed to a Tune-O-Matic.) The neck pickup is a single-coil Fender Texas Special, which was originally designed as a bridge pickup for Fender's Stevie Ray Vaughan model. The bridge pickup is a DiMarzio H-3 Humbucker.

"The Texas Special is a little hotter than most single coils," Brooks explains. "With a humbucker at the bridge, the Texas Special in the neck position really helped to balance things out so that there wasn't such a drastic drop in volume and output going from one pickup to the other."

"Kurt requested two guitars," says Mark Wittenberg, "one in Solid Blue and one in Fiesta Red." The blue instrument was delivered to Cobain, who used it on Nirvana's 1993 tour. "We were just finishing the Fiesta Red one," Wittenberg continues. "In fact, we were literally ready to deliver it when we received word of his death."

The red guitar has been earmarked for the Fender Museum which is being planned. Meanwhile, Fender is discussing plans to make the Jagstang model available to the general public. ●


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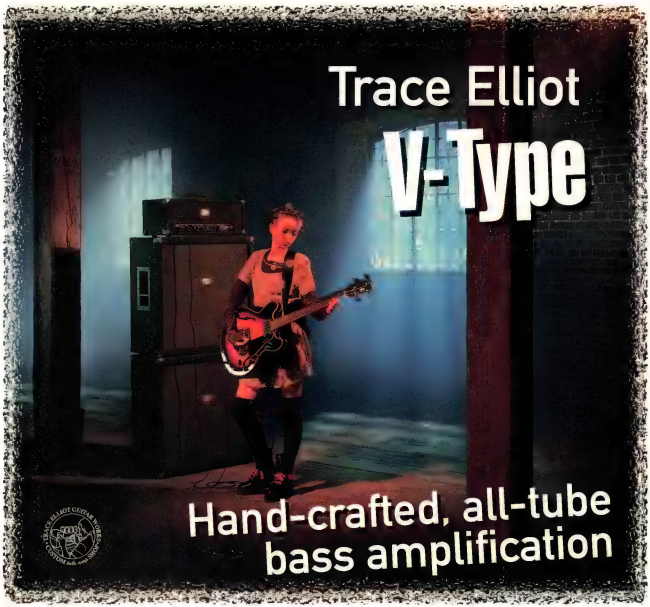

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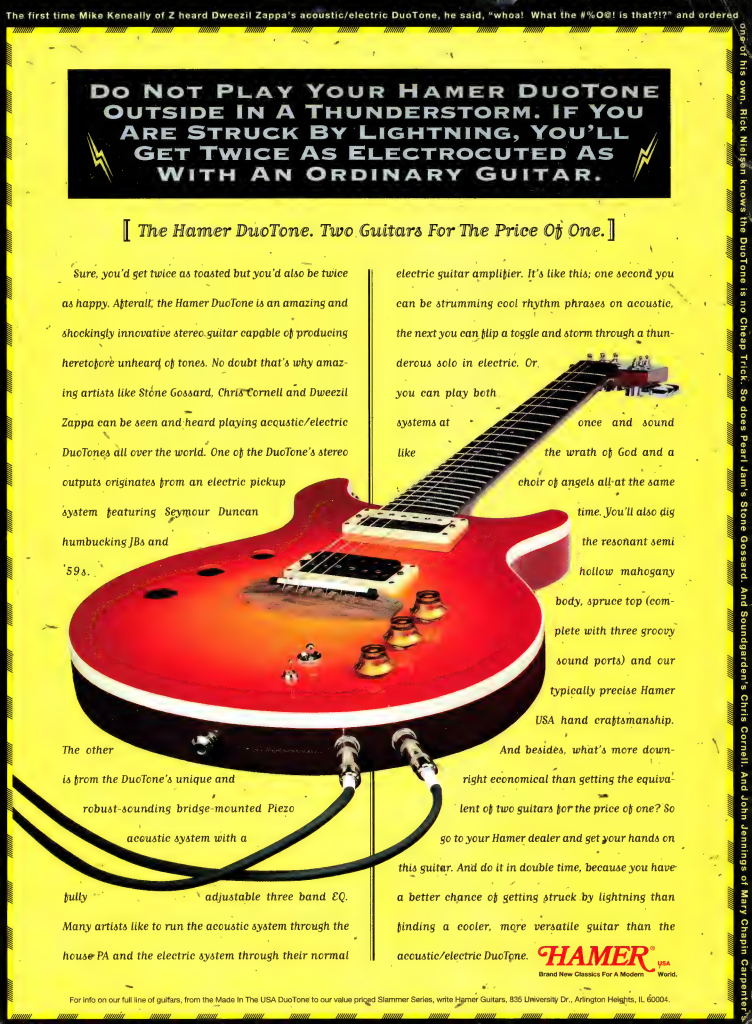

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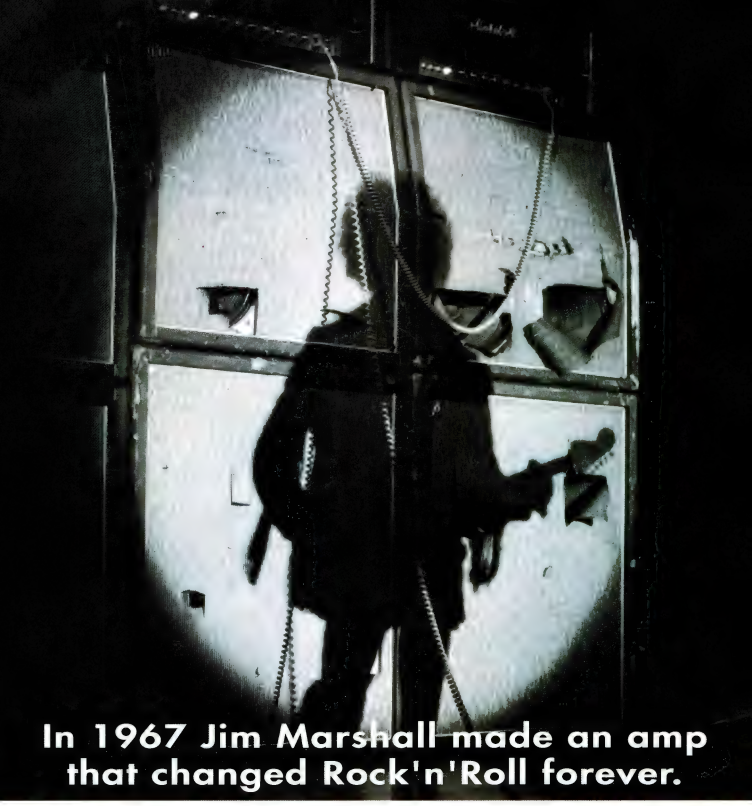

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BY TONY BACON

JEFF BECK USED this Gibson Les Paul to make his brilliant 1975 crossover jazz-rock album *Blow By Blow,* produced by "fifth-Beatle" George Martin. The guitar, which is the one pictured in a live shot on the rear of the album sleeve. was used by Beck. throughout that period of his career.

A doubtful-looking serial number suggests that the guitar may have been made in 1952, but the tuners are replacements, as are the pickups—and even the neck was probably made later than the body. Though the guitar's refinish looks black, it is, in fact, very dark brown—what Jeff himself describes as "oxblood."

This Les Paul, which Beck most likely bought in the early 1970's, was the third such Gibson that he owned. His first, a 1959 sunburst model, was stolen from him in New York in the late Sixties while the second began life as a sunburst but was stripped down to natural wood by Beck. He used it on songs like "Hi Ho Silver Lining" (1967) and "Barabajagal" (1969).

By the time he recorded *Blow By Blow,* Jeff was already moving over to Fenders, as he recalls: "There was also a '58 Strat on that record, and a Telecaster with Gibson humbuckers that I got in a trade for my Yardbirds '54 Esquire. It was only later that I realized what I'd done—I shouldn't have let that guitar go!" Fortunately, Jeff still owns this historic Les Paul.

*This Les Paul as well as Jeff Beck's second 'stripped' Les Paul and many other classics can be seen in the* Gibson Les Paul Book *(Miller Freeman 1993, $19.95), a complete illustrated history of Les Paul guitars by Tony Bacon & Paul Day.*

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